

# Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU)

## Information for visitors of the CVICU at Toronto General Hospital

Welcome to the Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU). We know this is a difficult time for you, and we would like to offer our help and support.

You can read this pamphlet to learn more about what to expect while your loved one is on the unit and who to contact if you have questions or concerns.

We hope that you find this information useful.

Meagan Eason  
Nurse Manager



## **What we do in the CVICU**

Our goal is to work with you so that we can make sure your loved one receives the best possible plan of care.

## **Coping with a serious illness**

Your loved one is with us because they need a highly skilled medical team and specialized, modern technology. Our unit will meet both of these needs.

We know that this experience is a traumatic one for your entire family. We will do our best to support and care for both you and your loved one.

At times you may feel things are not improving. But the body needs time to heal. It is important to stay hopeful and try to encourage your loved one. By working together as a team, we can all help your loved one cope with this stressful situation.

## **What to expect after the surgery**

- After cardiovascular surgery, your loved one is brought to the CVICU.
- The cardiovascular surgeon speaks to you in the 3rd floor Clinical Services Building surgical waiting area.
- A volunteer then takes you to the 2nd floor Peter Munk Cardiac Centre CVICU waiting area and arranges for you to visit your loved one.
- When you first see your loved one after surgery, they are still asleep.
- They are not able to talk or move. You will see a breathing machine and intravenous (IV) medications, which we use to treat pain.
- It may be hard to see your loved one attached to machines. Know that we are keeping them comfortable and watching them closely. It might also help to know that the patient usually does not remember anything during this time.
- When your loved one is warm and stable, we wake them and remove the breathing machine. How much time this takes depends on many things and is hard to predict.

## Visiting hours

We know how important you are to your loved one and how hard this situation is for the family. Our visiting hours are flexible to meet your needs. Talk with your bedside nurse to plan when to visit.

If children are visiting they must be with an adult at all times while on the unit.

**Remember, you are a very important part of the team.** During this stressful time, please take care of yourself. Try to eat and sleep properly. Taking time away from the hospital is very important too. Always know that while you are away, your loved one will never be alone in the CVICU.

## Choosing a spokesperson

A spokesperson is someone who phones the CVICU for updates and lets all the other family members and friends know. This is also the person who staff will call if they need to give information about your loved one's condition or care.

**Please choose 1 person as a spokesperson.**

## Family meetings

Sometimes the health care team or your family may feel it's important to have a meeting. We can schedule family meetings with you at a time that is good for everyone. These meetings give the health care team and patients, families and caregivers the chance to meet and talk about how your loved one is doing.

## Who is part of the team?

### Family members and caregivers

You are an important part of the care of our patients. There are even ways to help with your loved one's daily care plan. Your bedside nurse will show you how to do this safely.

Some examples of how you may help your loved one include:

- giving special mouth and skin care
- encouraging breathing, leg and arm exercises
- communicating with your loved one if they are not able to talk

### Many people will be part of your loved one's care. These are the people you will meet most often:

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>CV Surgeon</b>                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Surgeon who operated on your loved one</li></ul>  |
| <b>CVICU Nurse</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nurse with ICU training</li><li>• CVICU Nurses will be with your loved one 24 hours a day</li></ul>   |
| <b>Surgical and Anesthesia Fellows</b>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 2 Medical Doctors (Fellows)</li><li>• A Fellow or Staff Physician is always available in the CVICU</li></ul>  |
| <b>CV Anesthetist (Staff Physician)</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Doctor in charge of the unit</li><li>• Provides daily medical care</li><li>• Every Monday, one of our 8 CV anesthetists will take charge for the week</li></ul> |
| <b>Consultants</b>                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Other doctors contacted as needed to make sure the best possible care is given</li></ul>  |
| <b>Nurse Manager</b>                    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Nurse in charge of the unit</li></ul>   |
| <b>Nurse Practitioner</b>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Advanced practice nurse is part of ICU medical team</li></ul>   |

- Patient Care Coordinator**
  - Nurse who helps the manager to coordinate patient care
  
- Charge Nurse**
  - Nurse who coordinates nursing shifts
  
- Physiotherapist (PT)**
  - Provides an exercise program that helps to improve body strength and to keep the lungs clear
  
- Occupational Therapist (OT)**
  - Provides splints to prevent muscle tightening and makes sure the hands and feet are in the right position
  
- Respiratory Therapist (RT)**
  - In charge of the breathing machine (ventilator) and checks how your loved one is breathing every day
  
- Dietitian**
  - Makes sure your loved one receives the best possible nutrition either by eating the right kinds of foods or by getting nutrition from a special tube, if there are swallowing problems
  
- Social Worker**
  - Provides family counseling and support
  - Coordinates family meetings (see page 3 for more information)
  - Talks about what kind of care is possible when you loved one leaves the hospital.
  - We call this discharge planning.
  
- Patient Care Assistants (PCA)**
  - Help the nurse with basic care
  - Help your loved one with body movement
  
- Spiritual Care Professionals**
  - Work with families and caregivers who are affected by a crisis
  - Please ask the bedside nurse to contact them for you

## **Volunteers**

- Manage the waiting area and help organize your visits into the CVICU
- Let you know about other areas and services in the hospital



## **General information**

### **Making phone calls**

There is a visitor's phone in the CVICU Waiting Room and a public phone in the hallway outside of the waiting area. Please use the visitor's phone before entering the CVICU to make sure that it is safe to visit.

If we ask to stay in the waiting room, please be patient. There is always a good reason for this. Out of respect for other visitors in the waiting area, **cell phones can only be used in the hallways (not the waiting area).**

### **Scent free environment**

Please do not wear any scented product. If you are wearing perfumes or scented products, please remove them before entering the unit.

### **Hand washing**

Hand sanitizer gel is available throughout the unit. Please apply the gel to your hands each time you enter and leave the unit.

### **Do not visit the CVICU if you are feeling sick. Check for these symptoms:**

- cough
- nausea
- diarrhea
- vomiting
- fever (temperature above 38 °C or 101 °F)

## Eating at the food court

The Food Court is located on the Ground Floor of the Eaton Wing.  
Open every day from 7:00 am to 9:30 pm, including holidays.

## Nearby places to stay

To get a complete list of nearby places to stay ask the staff for a printed list or check the UHN website at [www.uhn.ca](http://www.uhn.ca). Search for "Accommodations & Places to Stay".

## Where to find us

Toronto General Hospital, 200 Elizabeth St.  
Cardiovascular Intensive Care Unit (CVICU)  
Eaton Building – 2nd floor (Room 539) Toronto ON M5G 2C4  
Phone: 416 340 3550

## Who to contact

Nurse Manager

Phone: 416 340 4800, ext 8649

Director of CVICU

Phone: 416 340 4800 ext 8258

For complaints, a suggestions or a compliments, you may wish to talk to your health care team first. If you still need more information, please call the **Patient Relations** office for help at 416 340 4907.



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