

**Patient
Information**

Critical Care Department

Cheltenham General Hospital

Introduction

This leaflet gives a brief introduction as to what to expect when visiting a patient in the Department of Critical Care (DCC).

About the Department of Critical Care

The Department of Critical Care (DCC) is a 12 bedded specialist ward. Patients are admitted to the DCC for close observation and supportive treatment either after major surgery or during an acute period of an illness. The DCC is situated on the ground floor of St Luke's Wing. The department is a mixed sex ward, with male and female patients.

It is very important that the dignity and privacy of the patient that you are visiting is maintained at all times.

Please speak to the nurse in charge if you have any further questions.

If you are concerned about anything please speak to a member of the team and we will try our best to help.

During your relatives admission on DCC

The DCC can be a noisy environment with lots of activity and alarms sounding. This does not necessarily mean that there is a problem. The nurse will explain the alarms and the treatment your relative is receiving to help reassure you and your loved one.

To allow staff to monitor a patient's vital signs (heart rate, breathing, blood pressure) and administer treatment, the patient may have various wires, tubes and pieces of equipment attached to them.

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Department

Critical Care

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Patient Information

Patients in the DCC may be deeply asleep following an anaesthetic or from sedative medication. They may also need help with their breathing. This respiratory help is given via a tube that goes down the windpipe. The tube is attached to a ventilator (breathing machine) and goes past the voice box which means that the patient will temporarily be unable to speak.

As the patient wakes or their condition improves, the tube can be taken out, but they may still need oxygen via a face mask. However, it is not always possible to remove the tube. The Critical Care team may discuss with the patient's next of kin the benefits of using a temporary tracheostomy. A tracheostomy is a surgical opening (hole) in the neck where a tube is passed into the wind pipe to aid breathing. This would allow us to wake the patient up.

Staff

Nurses – All nurses working on the DCC receive specialist training. Most nurses will have completed a specialist critical care course. Each nurse will have a maximum of 2 patients to care for per shift.

Uniforms

Sister – Navy tunic or dress

Charge nurse – Navy tunic

Female Staff Nurses – Blue and white striped tunic or dress

Male Staff Nurses – White tunic or blue and white striped tunic

Health Care Assistant – Green and white striped tunic or dress

Doctors – All patients have a consultant surgeon or physician responsible for them. While in the DCC the patient will also be cared for by the Critical Care team, consultants and resident doctors.

Regular discussions and clinical updates between the patient, their relatives or carers and the nurses and doctors are encouraged.

Physiotherapists - The physiotherapist will assist patients daily with breathing exercises to help prevent chest infections. They will also help the patient with mobilisation as their condition improves.

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Other staff who contribute to patient care on the DCC are the Speech and Language Therapists, pharmacists, dieticians, radiographers, an infection control consultant, the ward clerk, domestic staff and hospital volunteers.

Infection control

While patients are unwell, they may become vulnerable to infections. On admission to the department, all patients are routinely checked for Methicillin Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). MRSA leaflets are available in our visitor's room.

We ask that all visitors to the DCC use the alcohol hand rub when entering and leaving the ward area. Please let the staff know if the hand rub containers are empty. Strict infection control procedures apply to all staff and visitors. Please do not be afraid to ask staff to wash their hands. If you are unwell please do not visit the unit.

Spiritual needs

A hospital chaplain is always on call and spiritual advisors of all denominations are also available if patients or their relatives would like support. Please ask a member of the team to arrange for a chaplain or advisor to visit.

Visiting

We encourage visiting in the afternoons as mornings can be very busy due to doctors' rounds, physiotherapy and X-rays, this may involve long waiting times for visitors. It is also important to have periods of quiet time to allow patients and their relatives to rest. A visitors' room with drinks facilities is situated in the reception area.

Please contact the department for further details about visiting.

There are limited facilities for relatives to stay overnight. If this is considered necessary, please ask a member of staff for more details.

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Parking

When your close family member has been a patient in the DCC for 3 days we are able to offer you access to reduced parking fees. Please speak to the nurse caring for your relative or to the sister in charge.

Planned admissions

If as the patient or their relative you feel you would benefit from a visit to the department before a planned admission please contact the unit or ask the ward staff to arrange a visit. A nurse will be happy to greet you and show you around the department. They will also explain about the equipment that may be used during admission and answer any questions that you may have.

Property

Due to the lack of space and the need for rigorous infection control, a limit on personal property is essential. We suggest wash items only (no flannels). Valuables, such as money or mobile phones, should not be brought in and if chosen to is at the patient's own risk.

Transfer to the ward

Once the patient's condition improves and less close observation is needed, they will be transferred to a general ward. We understand that this may be an anxious time for you all but it is a positive step and shows the improvement in the patient's condition.

The Acute Care Response Team (specialist nurses) may follow up the patient's recovery on the ward and will be able to offer support.

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Contact information

Relatives may enquire about a patient's condition by telephoning the department. We suggest that 1 or 2 people are appointed to ring on behalf of the patient's family and friends.

You can contact our direct lines at any time, day or night.

Department of Critical Care

Cheltenham General Hospital

Tel: 0300 422 4013

Tel: 0300 422 2593

Patients, relatives, carers and visitors should contact the matron or the sister in charge if they have any concerns about care and cleanliness.

Your comments and feedback are always valued.

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