

**Patient
Information**

Critical Care at Gloucestershire Royal Hospital

Information for carers and families

Introduction

This leaflet gives a brief introduction as to what to expect when visiting a patient in the Department of Critical Care (DCC). Please speak to the nurse in charge if you have any further questions.

The Department of Critical Care (DCC) is a 13 bedded specialist ward where patients are admitted for close observation and supportive treatment either after major surgery or during the most acute phase of an illness. It is situated on the first floor of the tower block. The department is a mixed sex ward, with male and female patients, however, it is very important that the dignity and privacy of the patient that you are visiting is maintained at all times.

Attached to the DCC there is also has a 6 bedded Surgical High Dependency Unit. This unit is where patients are admitted post-surgery who, require closer observations for a short period of time. The length of stay in the Surgical High Dependency Unit (HDU) is expected to be no longer than 24 to 48 hours.

Your stay

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 noises and interventions to help reassure you if you are worried. To enable staff to monitor a patient's vital signs (heart rate, breathing, blood pressure) and administer treatment, they may have various wires, tubes and pieces of equipment attached to them.

Patients in the DCC may be deeply asleep following an anaesthetic or from sedative drugs and may require help with 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. Communication aids will be provided as required.

Reference No.

GHPI0892_01_16

Department

Critical Care

Review due

January 2019

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As the patient wakes or their condition improves, the tube can be taken out, but they may still need oxygen via a face mask.

Staff

Nurses – Nurses are all specially trained and have a maximum of two patients to care for per shift. The female Staff Nurses wear a blue and white striped tunic or dress and the male Staff Nurses wear a white tunic. The Health Care Assistants wear green and white striped tunic or dress. The Sister/Charge Nurse wears a navy tunic or dress.

Doctors – All patients have a consultant surgeon or physician responsible for them. Whilst in the DCC they 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 and help with mobilisation as their condition improves. Physiotherapists wear blue trousers and a white tunic or polo shirt.

Other disciplines – Staff who also contribute to patient care and the unit are the pharmacist, dietician, radiographers, an infection control consultant, the ward clerk, domestic staff and hospital volunteers.

Infection control

Whilst 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). Please ask for a MRSA leaflet if one has not been given. Visitors are to use the alcohol hand rub when entering and leaving the ward area. Please inform staff if the hand rub containers are empty. Stringent infection control procedures are applied to all staff and visitors. Please do not be afraid to ask staff to wash their hands. If you are unwell do not visit, please stay at home until completely well. If you are concerned about anything please ask a member of the team and we will try our best to help.

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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 their support. Please ask a member of the team to arrange 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 entail long waiting times for visitors. It is also important to have periods of quiet time to enable patients and their relatives to rest, we encourage this time between 1:00pm and 3:00pm. A visitors' room with drinks facilities is situated in the reception foyer. There are limited facilities for relatives to stay overnight, if this is considered necessary. Please ask a member of staff for more details. Visiting for Surgical HDU is restricted to between 2:00pm and 8:00pm.

Parking

When your close family member has been a patient in the Department of Critical Care 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 you feel that your relative or the person you care for would benefit from a visit to the department prior to their admission please contact the unit or ask the ward staff to arrange a visit. A nurse will be happy to greet you, show you the department, and explain equipment that may be used during admission and to answer any questions that you or the patient may have.

Property

Due to the lack of space and the need for rigorous infection control, a limitation of property is essential. We suggest wash items only (no flannels). Valuables such as money or mobile phones should not be brought in.

**Patient
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Once the patient's condition improves and they require less close observation, they will be transferred to a general ward. This is a positive step and reflects the improvement in the patient's condition. The Acute Care Response Team (specialist nurses) may follow up the patient's recovery on the ward. On discharge the relative of the patient will receive a copy of leaflet GHPI0110 'After critical care' which will explain this in more detail. Please ask a member of the nursing team if you do not receive one.

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 us at any time, day or night.

**Department of Critical Care
ITU (B End)**

Tel: 0300 422 6182

High Dependency Unit (A End)

Tel: 0300 422 6178

Surgical High Dependency Unit

Tel: 0300 422 8852

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.

Content reviewed: January 2016