



# *Intensive Care Unit Family Guide*

*Royal University Hospital  
and  
St. Paul's Hospital*



*Critical Care  
Patient/Family Advisory Council*

## *An introductory message to families from families*

Your loved one's admission to the intensive care unit (ICU) may have been planned following surgery, or it may be unexpected. Whatever brings them here, they require constant monitoring and support only available in these specialized areas.

The unit can be a very overwhelming place. We understand; we've been here too. That's why we created this pamphlet for you. Prepared jointly by both families and staff, it is intended as a guide to help you navigate your way while you are here. That way you can better spend your time and energy where it is needed most, with your loved one.

If you need more information, or if you have questions or concerns, it is important that you get the answers you need. Feel free to contact the appropriate unit manager. They are there to help.

- ▶ Royal University Hospital ICU..... 306-655-2047
- ▶ St. Paul's Hospital ICU ..... 306-655-5284

There is a mobile app available that includes all of the information contained in this booklet. It can be found in the Apple App Store under Saskatoon Health Region, CFCC.

If you are interested in serving as an advisor or partner with the Client and Family Centered Care team please email [CFCC@saskatoonhealthregion.ca](mailto:CFCC@saskatoonhealthregion.ca).

## Upon arrival

If this is your first time in ICU, please call in to the unit first so that someone can help you.

When patients first come into the unit, information is collected and tests are performed to determine what is wrong. The priority is to take care of them and provide life support.

Care providers may not have answers as soon as you would like. We appreciate that time passes very slowly when you are waiting. Please know that we will do our best to keep you updated.

## Safety

Critically ill patients are often more susceptible to infections. Because some hospital patients may be treated for various conditions, including infections, it is important that we all help to prevent the spread of germs and promote safety in the hospital.

Patients and family are considered part of our team to ensure a safe and healthy environment.

**Hand Hygiene** - All health-care providers and family must practice good hand cleaning immediately before AND after leaving a patient's room. Sinks are located at the entrances to all units. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer can be found at patient rooms and in other locations throughout our area. Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water or rub hands vigorously with the sanitizer. Please remind others, including staff, if you notice that they have forgotten to clean their hands.



**Isolation** - Occasionally patients may be placed on isolation precautions. Some germs are spread by touching a contaminated item. Others such as the common cold can be spread by coughing or spraying droplets into the air. There are different types of isolation and the nurse at the bedside will tell you the steps that need to be taken before you see your family member.

**Restraints** - Your loved one may experience periods of agitation or confusion due to their illness or medications. They may try to pull at lines or tubes or attempt to get out of bed. We may need to use restraints in these situations to protect them. Staff will discuss the use of restraints and ask for your consent if necessary.

**Environmental cleaning** - Each room and all beds and equipment are thoroughly cleaned after each patient use. All patient areas and family rooms are cleaned daily. If you encounter an area requiring some additional attention, please let staff know so it can be attended to.

**Safety Alert System (SAS)** - This Safety Alert System is a way of reporting any safety issues or concerns that can cause harm. Patients and family are encouraged to use the system to alert others of any potentially harmful situations. By reporting an unsafe situation, we can stop any activity that could cause further harm.

To report a safety concern call 306-655-1600 or 1-844-655-1600.

WHEN SHOULD YOU CALL THE SAFETY CENTRE?	
	GOOD CATCH or NEAR MISS
	LITTLE TO NO HARM DONE
	HARM HAPPENS
	SERIOUS EVENT
SAFER EVERY DAY	

## *Families are welcome*

We encourage you to spend time with your loved one and we would like to talk to your family about what works best for spending time in the unit.

**First Visit** - If it is someone's first visit, they should call prior to coming in. That way we can show them around and explain the area.

**Closed Curtains** - When personal care or tests are being done, the curtains will be drawn. Please do not enter, but inquire with a nurse if it is okay to come in.



***Additional Information*** - Due to space restrictions we may ask you to limit the number of people present at the bedside. Rest and sleep are important for recovery. Frequent shorter visits may be better than lengthy ones.

Illness among visiting family members - If you or other members are sick, you should avoid coming to the hospital. Even just staying in the family room can cause the spread of germs to others and possibly to our patients. If you are unsure, please consult with the bedside nurse prior to coming to see if it is safe for you to visit.

### ***Decision-making***

Often your loved one is unable to speak or communicate. In that instance we need you to tell us if they have:

- ▶ **Advanced Health Care Directive or Living Will.** A signed document stating their wishes.\*
- ▶ **Proxy.** A person legally appointed by the patient to make health-care decisions if the patient is unable.\*
- ▶ **Allergies and Medical History.** As the voice of your loved one, it is of critical importance that we be made aware of any special health concerns.

If you have information on any of these, please bring this information to the RN or staff's attention.

*\*A copy may be requested for their chart.*

**Decision Maker** - The decision maker or proxy is the person who will be responsible for guiding the health-care team to understand and follow your loved one's wishes. This includes giving consent and making treatment decisions.

If there is no document naming a proxy then selection of a substitute decision maker is guided by the Health Care Directives and Substitute Decision Makers Act. This is the order usually followed in designating someone:

- ▶ Spouse (living together in a married or common-law relationship)
- ▶ Adult child
- ▶ Parent or legal custodian
- ▶ Adult sibling
- ▶ Other relatives in a specific order

**Spokesperson** - In order to ensure your family is kept up to date with what is going on, we have found it best that a family spokesperson relay information. It is recommended that one person act as family spokesperson. This may or may not be the decision maker.

Please provide us with the name and phone number of one person who will be the family spokesperson.

*It is important to know that when any decisions have to be made, the legal substitute decision maker must be contacted.*

## *What to expect in ICU*

It may not be easy coming into the ICU. There are many unfamiliar sights, sounds and smells. The areas are active and often noisy with machines and alarms.

If your loved one needs a breathing machine (ventilator) they will be unable to speak. If they are awake, they will find it easier to respond to questions requiring a simple "yes or no" response. They may be strong enough to write notes to communicate or use an alphabet board to indicate letters and words. Try to be patient as this can be a frustrating time.

If they are unconscious, they may still be able to hear and feel. We encourage you to talk to them, hold their hand, or gently touch them. This may feel awkward at first. Your visit is important and can be meaningful for both of you.

In some cases you may notice that their behaviour may have changed due to their illness or medication. Your visit brings something familiar to them and adds to their recovery.



## *Taking care of yourself*

Please take time for rest, healthy meals, fresh air and time away from the hospital. This will help you to cope during this stressful time.

Resources such as spiritual care and social work are available for your support. Ask the bedside nurse or staff member and they will help you to contact the appropriate person.

## *Family rooms*

At each site the family rooms are shared. Due to limited space, we ask that families be considerate of other families' needs. Larger groups are best accommodated in additional spaces such as the cafeteria.

Please respect that others are also going through difficult times and may need quiet time, time for reflection or time for grieving.

The family rooms will be cleaned regularly, however it is important that we all work together to keep the space neat and tidy.

Phones are located in each room and the numbers are as follows:

▶ St. Paul's Hospital

- ◆ #1 ..... 306-655-5886
- ◆ #2 ..... 306-655-5697
- ◆ #3 ..... 306-655-5816

▶ Royal University Hospital

- ◆ Main/TV ..... 306-655-2041
- ◆ Quiet/small..... 306-655-2445

## *A family guide to rounds*

Every day, the medical team meets at each patient's bedside to discuss their progress. This is called "rounds" and is an opportunity for you to speak with your loved one's doctor. Family can share any additional information with the team.

Rounds begin around 9:00 a.m. and can last until early afternoon. We highly recommend that the decision maker and family spokesperson attend. This is the best opportunity to know what is going on and ask questions.

Team members will review the previous 24 hours of care, then identify goals for the day and current treatment. They will summarize the discussion in terms that are easier for you to understand, and you will be given an opportunity to ask questions. If you do not understand something, or want clarification, make sure to ask. Don't be scared or shy!

If your family requires a more private conversation, or more time to ask questions, let your nurse know. A family conference will be arranged at a time that works for everyone.

Our goal is to help you understand what is happening during this time while your loved one is in this unit.

## *Your medical team*

***Physicians/doctors*** - Medical care is provided by our specialized team of doctors. They are on call 24 hours and are available to answer any questions and explain treatment plans. Each site has two main or attending physicians that work as a team for a week at a time. You may hear the following terms used to describe the various ICU doctors:

- ▶ Physician of the week (POW) or attending physician
- ▶ Critical Care Associate (CCA). They stay in the unit and work with the POW.
- ▶ Residents. These are training physicians that work under the direction of the POW or CCA.

**Registered Nurses (RN)** - Each patient receives individualized nursing care. RNs are responsible for the monitoring and care of one or possibly two patients during their 12 hour shift.

They are an excellent source of information, and we encourage you to ask them questions about your loved one's care.

**Social Workers**- Social workers provide support and counselling for family members. They also help organize family conferences and provide referrals to community services if needed.

**Respiratory Therapists (RT)** - RTs have specialized training to assess and help manage respiratory or breathing problems. They monitor and make adjustments to the ventilators (breathing machines). They are available 24 hours per day and can answer respiratory-related questions.

**Dietitians** - These dietary specialists work with the ICU team to help determine the nutritional needs for each patient and the best way to deliver feeds.

**Pharmacists** - Pharmacists assist the team by reviewing all medication orders, providing detailed information and making suggestions for the safe and appropriate use of drugs during this critical illness time.

**Physiotherapists** - Physiotherapists work closely with staff to develop an individualized plan to prevent complications and encourage early mobilization when possible.

## ***Supporting team members***

**Unit Assistants/Clerks** - Clerks are often the ones to receive your phone calls and greet you upon entry at the main desk. They can give directions and answer questions about the hospital.

**Continuing Care Aides** - These team members stock supplies. They also help transfer patients for tests outside of the ICU, and assist nursing staff with repositioning of patients.

**Volunteers** - The volunteers have limited and varied hours. They are usually present midday during the week. They can assist with visiting and answer questions about the hospital and the city. If the volunteer is not present, please check with the unit clerk at the main desk.

## *Spiritual and cultural care*

Spiritual care is best defined as caring for the heart and soul of an individual; the ability of one person to be intentionally present and caring of another.

Chaplains from various denominations are available to provide spiritual counselling and guidance for patients and families. Cultural care providers are available for First Nations and Métis patients and families.

Spiritual care practitioners may make visits to patients as needed. Please feel free to request a visit from a spiritual care practitioner.

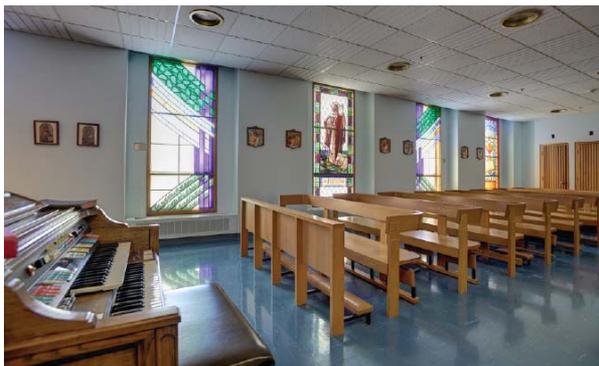
Spiritual and cultural care is available at all sites.

Practitioners can be contacted through the nursing staff or by calling:

- ▶ Monday to Friday 8am to 4pm ... 306-655-1249
- ▶ Evenings and Weekends..... 306-221-5330
- ▶ Through St. Paul's switchboard ... 306-655-5000

Chapels and multi-faith rooms (available for smudging):

- ▶ RUH
  - ◆ Chapel and multi-faith room – 4th floor
  - ◆ Open 24 hours
- ▶ SPH
  - ◆ Chapel - 3rd floor
  - ◆ First Nations Prayer and Ceremonial room, and Multifaith Stillness room - 5th floor
  - ◆ Open 24 hours.



## Helpful tips

**Accommodations** - Some hotels offer discounts to families of hospital patients. Accommodations close to the hospital may also be available. Ask a volunteer or any staff member for more information.

**Parking** - Daily, weekly and monthly passes are available. They can be purchased at RUH parking office and SPH cashier's office.

**Washrooms** - are located in both hospital cafeterias and near family rooms.



**Food and beverages** - At RUH THE Downstairs Café is located on ground floor, THE Mall Café and Starbucks are on mall level. At SPH THE Downstairs Café is located on level 0, Tim Horton's is on the main floor.

**Cell phones and Internet** - Cell phones are allowed. Please set your phone to vibrate. Wireless Internet is also available. Search for "Patients/Visitors" WiFi on your mobile device.

**Scent-free** - Due to allergies, we ask that you refrain from wearing perfume or scented products of any kind.

**Flowers and balloon bouquets** - are not allowed in the critical care areas due to risk of infections and allergy concerns.

**Taking notes** - During this time you may find it difficult to remember what the care team said or did. We recommend that someone in your support team, perhaps the family spokesperson, takes notes. It will make it easier to keep track of what is going on. It is also an excellent resource going forward. YOU can use the last two pages of this document for notes.

**Library/resource rooms** - The room at SPH is located on the second floor, near the elevators. The room at RUH is located in the main mall area. Access hours are posted.

**Personal Items** - Some items may be brought from home such as copies of family pictures, unscented lotion, deodorant, shaving cream, a comb or a brush. You may also bring in some of your loved one's favorite music, a music player and headphones. This can provide them with a source of comfort, relaxation and entertainment.



**Concerns or Complaints** - If you have any concerns or questions about your loved one's care or your family's experience, please speak to a manager. You can also contact a Client Representative. Client representatives can be reached at 306-655-0250 or 1-866-655-5066.

## *Hospital foundations*

Both St. Paul's Hospital Foundation and Royal University Hospital Foundation were established in 1983 to raise funds to surpass the basic services provided by government funding.

Through foundation efforts, additional resources have provided new programs, training and technology to improve the health of patients, and to increase the comfort of families and patients.

If you wish to show your appreciation for the care provided to your loved one, you may direct your donation to the ICU Education Fund at either foundation office.

### ***St. Paul's Hospital Foundation -***

St. Paul's Hospital proudly continues the healing mission begun by the Grey Nuns more than 100 years ago. The staff and physicians work to care for the spiritual and physical well-being of each person.



For more information on how you can make a difference, please contact St. Paul's Hospital Foundation office 306-655-5821 or visit the website

[www.stpaulshospital.org](http://www.stpaulshospital.org).

### ***Royal University Hospital Foundation -***

The Royal University Foundation continues to be a financial support for health-care excellence goals involving patient care, advanced medical training and research.

To make a donation or to receive additional information, please contact Royal University Foundation office 306-655-1984 or visit them online at [www.ruhf.org](http://www.ruhf.org).









*Healthiest people*  
*Healthiest communities*  
*Exceptional service*

Royal University Hospital ICU ..... 306-655-2035  
St. Paul's Hospital ICU ..... 306-655-5280

The Intensive Care Unit  
Family Guide is also  
available in the  
App Store.



*www.saskatoonhealthregion.ca*  
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