

Getting to know
**The Intensive Care Unit (ICU)
and High Acuity Unit (HAU)**

Richmond Hospital
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The Intensive Care Unit/High Acuity Unit (ICU/HAU) is where very ill/injured patients receive specialized care 24 hours a day. It can be an overwhelming place. We hope that this information pamphlet along with the support of the staff will help you to become better informed about the care your loved one receives. The same health care teams care for your loved one on both the ICU and HAU. One nurse may care for one patient or for several patients, depending on the patients' needs and health status.

Critical Care Team Members

The ICU/HAU health care team may include doctors, nurses, respiratory therapists, physiotherapists, pharmacists, dietitians, social workers, a spiritual care worker and an occupational therapist. Our ICU doctors rotate every Monday. You may also receive help from the unit clerk.

Since Richmond is a teaching hospital there may also be students working under the guidance of the team members.

We recognize and value the important support that family and friends can provide to their loved one while in the ICU/HAU. We ask that you respect the following guidelines. They have been put in place to allow for the best interests of all patients in the ICU/HAU.

Family Spokesperson

Please provide us with the name and a phone number of one person who will act as your family spokesperson. This person can speak with the doctor or nurse on a regular basis about your relative's condition and then relay the details to other family and friends. This will help to maintain confidentiality. It also gives the staff more time to care for your loved one.

Periodic progress reports will be given to this spokesperson by one of the doctors or nurses. Feel free to ask questions. Write them down so you remember to ask us. We want you to understand your loved one's situation. Family meetings can be arranged as needed or upon your request. If you wish to meet with any member of the team, please ask. The spokesperson for your family can call for an update, at any time.

Visiting

You are encouraged to visit. Please use the phone at the entrance doors before each visit to ensure that tests, patient care or rest periods are not in progress. During these times your visit may be slightly delayed. Please wash your hands at the sink inside the ICU/HAU doors when entering and before leaving ICU/HAU. There is a space called the “ICU Quiet Room” just outside the ICU/HAU doors. This is for your use while your loved one is in ICU/HAU.

- You may visit anytime except during shift change which is from 7:00 a.m.–8:00 a.m. and again from 7:00 p.m.–8:00 p.m. You may be asked to leave for a period of time when the team are conducting assessments. Patient Care Rounds occur daily between 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. which may limit visitations. We ask that you are quiet and respectful of staff members who are engaged in shift change or rounds when you enter ICU/HAU during these times.
- Please be respectful of patient privacy and confidentiality and go directly to your loved one’s room once you enter ICU. If you wish to have an in-depth medical update and discussion with the team regarding your loved one, you can request to schedule a meeting (preferably not on Monday unless it is urgent).
- The ideal number of visitors at the bedside is 2 at a time from the immediate family (spouse, significant others, parents, siblings, patient’s children or support person).
- Rest and sleep are important for recovery. Please be mindful of the impact of visitations after 10:00 p.m. Frequent and shorter visits may be better than lengthy ones.

Fragrances

Do not wear perfume, cologne or aftershave while you are a visitor in a VCH facility. Flowers are also not allowed for patients in the ICU/HAU.

Personal Medications, Food, and Belongings

Please do not provide any medications or food from home or administer outside medication or food unless cleared by a health care member (Nurse, Physician, Pharmacist, Dietician). Be sure to label any personal items and leave credit cards, money and other valuables at home. This includes dentures if the patient is not able to wear them. In emergencies the patient’s well-being comes first and belongings are sometimes misplaced at this time. Photos, cards, or a calendar can be taped at the bedside to help reorientate your family member.

How Your Family Can Contribute

It may not be easy visiting in the ICU/HAU as there are many unfamiliar sights, smells and sounds. If your family member is unconscious, they may still be able to hear and feel. It may be awkward for you at first to talk, hold, or touch them as they may not respond. Should your loved one’s condition require little or no stimulation, the nurse will let you know.

If your loved one needs a breathing machine (ventilator) they will not be able to talk. You can still talk to them about daily events, family activities or social issues and keep them up-to-date. You may read a paper or a story to your relative. Here are some ways that might help you communicate if your loved one is awake. Ask questions which require a yes or no response. Help them to point to letters of the alphabet to form words on communication sheets (some available in Chinese) or assist them to write a response on paper.

Try to be patient during this challenging time. Holding a hand or a gentle touch can mean a great deal. Bring in a CD/CD player or MP3 player with headphones. This can provide a source of comfort, relaxation and entertainment. Your visit is important and can be meaningful for both of you.

Taking Care of Yourself

You are encouraged to take the time for rest, meals, fresh air and time away from the hospital. This will help you cope with what can be a stressful time. Resources such as spiritual care and social work are available for your support. The social worker can assist you with your situation both in the ICU/HAU and the community.

Transfer from the ICU/HAU

When the patient is well enough they will often be transferred to a special care unit, step down unit or directly to a ward.

Some of the people who cared for your family member in the ICU/HAU (e.g. surgeon, heart or lung doctor) will also care for them on the ward. If you wish you may tour the ward before transfer occurs.

Each transfer is unique and will involve changes for you and your family member.

Such changes may include:

- The level of “high tech care” may decrease as patients’ needs change.
- The number of patients under one nurse’s care will increase.
- You and your family member may become more involved in their daily care.
- Your family member may share a room with others and visitors may also be more frequent.

Because of these changes, the transfer from ICU/HAU can be a difficult time. You may need more support. Please ask questions or express your concerns so that we can make this transition easier.

Parking

A parkade and surface parking are located on the hospital grounds, and are accessible from Gilbert Road, on the west side of the hospital. The parkade and surface parking are also accessible from Westminster Highway on the north side of the hospital.

Hospital Information

- Cafeteria Hours:
Monday to Friday 7:30 a.m.–7:00 p.m.
Saturday to Sunday 8:30 a.m.–7:00 p.m.
- Starbucks Hours:
Monday to Friday 6:30 a.m.–5:00 p.m.
Saturday to Sunday 7:30 a.m.–4:00 p.m.
- Wifi:
Log into “healthguest” and ask your nurse for the password.



Making better
decisions together
with patients
and families

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or
email pchem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **JB.330.In8**
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