



# STAYING IN THE ICU

When you understand more about how the intensive care unit (ICU) works, you may feel more at ease:

- Get to know the ICU care team.
- Learn about the equipment and technology used in the ICU.
- Talk to a nurse, doctor, or other health-care provider if you have questions.



## ICU TEAM

### A TYPICAL ICU TEAM INCLUDES:

- Attending physicians, who supervise ICU care
- Doctors and physician assistants who specialize in intensive care medicine
- Nurses and nurse practitioners, who give specialized care
- Pharmacists, who provide medication support
- Respiratory therapists, who help with breathing issues
- Consulting doctors, who give advice or special care
- Social workers, who provide support to families and caregivers
- Dietitians, who make sure that the patient's nutritional needs are met
- Physical and speech therapists, who help with movement, talking, or swallowing
- Case managers, who plan care and next steps

# ASK ABOUT TREATMENT AND CARE

## 1 WHY IS THE PATIENT GROGGY?

Some treatments can be uncomfortable or painful. Patients may receive medicine to help them relax, and those drugs can make them sleepy.

## 2 WHY IS THE PATIENT TIED TO THE BED?

The ICU team may use restraints to keep patients from hurting themselves or removing important tubes and wires. Restraints don't hurt and are used only when needed.

## 3 WHY CAN'T THE PATIENT TALK TO ME?

Patients may not be able to talk if they have a breathing tube or were given medicine that makes them sleep.

## 4 WHAT IF THE PATIENT DOESN'T GET BETTER?

Unfortunately, not everyone in the ICU gets better. Doctors may suggest:

- Palliative care for relief from symptoms and stress of serious illness
- Hospice care for comfort and care for people near the end of life

## ASK ABOUT HOSPITAL POLICIES AND SERVICES

### + WHY DO I NEED TO SIGN SO MANY FORMS?

Patients in the ICU can't always talk or make decisions for themselves, and their care partner may need to make decisions for them. Hospital staff may ask you for a health-care proxy, a next-of-kin form.

### + WHY CAN'T I VISIT MORE OFTEN?

ICU visiting hours are shorter because patients need more care and rest.

### + IS THERE HELP OR SUPPORT FOR ME?

- Hospital chaplains and social workers can provide counseling or refer you to a counselor.
- Social workers can help with transportation, lodging, and financial concerns.



## GETTING ADVANCED CARE

ICUs offer the most advanced treatments in a compassionate, supportive environment for the best care possible.