

Post-intensive Care Syndrome: For Members of the Care Circle

General Information

Your loved one's critical illness or stay in an Intensive Care Unit puts you, a member of the care circle, at risk for changes in your feelings (mental) and thinking (cognitive).

The changes may be new or become worse. It may take months or years to fully recover.

Possible Changes in Your Health

You may have some of the following changes:

- mental changes (signs of depression or anxiety) such as:
 - feeling sad, anxious or “empty”
 - feeling hopeless, negative or both
 - feeling irritable or restless
 - losing interest in activities or hobbies you once enjoyed
 - feeling tired, unmotivated or having less energy than normal
 - changes in appetite and weight
 - changes in sleeping patterns
 - thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
 - strong feeling of fear
 - constant worry.
- cognitive changes (problems with memory, thinking, attention or learning) such as:
 - concentrating
 - following directions
 - interacting with other people
 - making decisions
 - problem-solving
 - remembering.

What You Can Do

- Learn about your symptoms. Ask questions during health care visits.
- Be positive. Humor helps keep things positive.
- Take care of yourself.
 - Take time for just you.
 - Ask others for help.
 - Talk about your feelings with a mental health provider.
 - Keep a journal.
- Join a support group. Ask your primary care provider for options.
- Make sure you and your loved one are getting enough sleep and eating healthful meals.

- ❑ Stay busy with activities. Ideas include:
 - regular exercise
 - visiting with friends
 - doing puzzles and games
 - volunteering.
- ❑ Watch for signs of depression. Call your primary care provider if you have any of these signs:
 - sad, anxious or “empty” feelings
 - hopelessness, negativity or both
 - severe guilt, worthlessness, helplessness or all three
 - irritability or restlessness
 - loss of interest in activities or hobbies
 - tiredness or having less energy than normal

- trouble concentrating, remembering details or making decisions
- trouble falling asleep, waking up early or sleeping too much
- changes in appetite and weight
- thoughts of suicide or suicide attempts
- aches and pains, headaches, cramps or digestive problems that do not go away with treatment.

- ❑ Keep to your regular routines and traditions as much as possible. Nurture your relationship.

Resources

- myicucare.org
- connect.mayoclinic.org/page/pics