

What to Expect in the Intensive Care Unit

What You Can Expect

Besides treating your loved one's illness or injury in the Intensive Care Unit, health care team members provide a safe and supportive healing environment every day.

They will manage pain, assess breathing, reduce sedation medicines, prevent and manage delirium, start early exercise, and engage you and other care circle members in your loved one's healing and recovery.

Manage pain

Health care team members will assess for pain many times each day. The goal is for your loved one to be comfortable with medicines and other treatments.

Breathing machine and oxygen

If your loved one is on a breathing machine (ventilator), they are evaluated every day to see if it is safe to come off the breathing machine or other oxygen delivery device.

Health care team members will wake them up to see how well they can breathe on their own.

Sedation medicines

Health care team members will review your loved one's medicines. They will reduce sedation medicines while making sure:

- your loved one has good pain control
- any delirium symptoms are managed.

Prevent and manage delirium

- Delirium is a severe state of confusion that comes on quickly.
- Symptoms can change from one day to the next. They include:
 - agitation, confusion
 - inability to pay attention, acting differently
 - emotional changes
 - hallucinations.
- Health care team members will watch for symptoms of delirium and plan for how best to treat them.

Early exercise and mobility

Early exercise helps prevent muscle loss and weakness. Daily activity benefits your loved one:

- with greater physical independence
- a better chance of going home after the hospital stay (instead of a skilled nursing facility)
- less chances of delirium.

Ask a member of the health care team how you can help with exercises.

Care circle members visits

Care circle members (family members and friends) are invited to visit and support their loved one.