Welcome to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU), where we take pride in providing total patient care that is skilled, personal, and compassionate. We value the trust that you have placed in us to care for your loved one. Our ICU team is here to help your loved one on the road to recovery. There are no visiting hour restrictions. Children under the age of 12 are not permitted. Check with the nursing manager if you have special requests.

Family Support
The involvement of family members in the recovery process is very important. To help you with concerns about your loved one’s recovery, we encourage you to ask questions. We are here around the clock to help support you and address your concerns. We want you to feel comfortable and confident that your loved one’s needs are being met. You can be a part of the care team in many ways:

- Ask questions about your loved one’s condition and recovery.
- Provide information about your loved one’s daily habits and sleep patterns.

How You Can Help
Research shows that family involvement can shorten the length of stay in the ICU. There are many ways you can help your loved one recover faster and return home sooner.

- Identify a family member to be the contact between the ICU team, family and friends.

New Approaches to Care in the ICU
Kaiser Permanente is redesigning the care provided in the ICU. This redesign focuses on the following aspects of ICU care:

- Encourage uninterrupted sleep.
- Reduce episodes of confusion (delirium).
- Minimize sedation.
- Encourage movement and balance.

Undisturbed Sleep
Deep sleep is needed for healthy brain function. Research has shown that patients who get better sleep have fewer episodes of delirium and recover more quickly. However, it can be difficult for patients to get deep sleep in an ICU. Kaiser Permanente ICUs have started to promote peaceful sleep for patients from about 10:00 PM until 6:00 AM. We are dimming lights, watching alarms from the nurses station, decreasing loud noises, and making efforts not to collect labs or perform tests unless necessary. We also avoid giving certain common types of sleep medications that can break up normal sleep patterns.

You can help. If there is something that your loved one uses regularly to get to sleep (such as music, warm milk, a cool room), please let us know. Does she or he take naps, and if so, when? This information will allow us to help him or her get the rest needed for recovery.

Reducing Delirium
Some ICU patients develop a sudden change in brain function called delirium. Delirium is not unusual and is more common in older patients. It can cause confusion, personality changes, and difficulty with directions or paying attention to a conversation. In some instances, it can also cause agitation.

Delirium can be caused by not getting enough sleep or even by sleep medications. It can also be caused by the stress of an illness or an infection. Delirium is often temporary, lasting a few days to a week. However, it usually delays a patient’s recovery time.
How do I talk to someone who has delirium? What do I say?
Including regular reminders into conversation is the best way to talk to someone with delirium.

- Use clocks and calendars to help with orientation.
- Regularly tell the person what day/time it is, where they are, and what’s happening around them.
- Talk about current events.
- Play word games.
- Make sure the patient wears eyeglasses, dentures and hearing aids if needed.

Avoiding Sedation
Decreased sedation usually results in a shorter stay for the patient. It also reduces the risk of delirium. When possible, we make every effort to minimize or eliminate sedation for our ICU patients.

Daily Movement
Early movement speeds recovery and can help get patients back home sooner. Movement decreases the need for pain control, improves natural sleep, decreases the risk of delirium, and increases muscle strength. Our patients are encouraged to move every day. When possible, we want patients to sit up, dangle their legs over the side of the bed, stand, and walk to increase strength. We encourage family members to be present and help with the daily activity of a loved one.
- Help to ease the patient’s fears by being present and giving support during movement.
- Encourage the patient to move daily.
- Share information about the positive effects of movement with other family members so that they can be supportive and help when they visit.

Is it too soon to get up and walk? He (she) seems too weak. Does it hurt?
Patients can be assisted to walk with IV poles and even with breathing equipment (ventilator) if they are strong enough. Patients are tested several times per day to determine if they are strong enough for early movement. Remember that early movement means your loved one gets to go home sooner.

Stress
Having a family member or close friend in the ICU can add stress to your life. How you manage this situation is important for you and your loved one. We have quiet rooms available where you or family members can spend some time alone when you need a time-out.

Here are some ways to reduce and manage stress:
- Maintain a balance between the needs of the patient and the needs of yourself or the family.
- Connect with support systems (family, friends, church).
- Talk with someone you trust to share your feelings.
- Practice stress management techniques that may have helped you in the past.
- Utilize alternative therapies (exercise, massage, meditation, breath work, music therapy, art therapy, pet therapy, aromatherapy, etc.).

Find out more about these helpful therapies on My Doctor Online http://kpdoc.org/stress and go to kp.org/listen to relax and listen to guided imagery podcasts.

Resources
A Hospital Social Worker is available to meet with you to discuss specific questions you may have regarding you or your loved one’s time off from work, your insurance benefits and available community resources.

A Spiritual Leader is available to discuss any concerns or requests you may have or show you where the quiet room or Chapel is located.

kp.org/listen – relax and listen to guided imagery podcasts

Other resources
Visit kp.org/mydoctor to:
- View most lab results and check your preventive health reminders
- Email your doctor
- Use interactive online tools to help keep you and your family healthy

Contact your Kaiser Permanente Health Education Center or Department for books, videos, classes, and additional resources.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor.

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