Welcome to the ICU/CCU at the Dartmouth General Hospital

325 Pleasant Street
Dartmouth, NS
B2Y 4G8

To call the unit:
(902) 465-8414
Welcome to the ICU/CCU at the Dartmouth General Hospital

The Dartmouth General Hospital serves about 120,000 people in Dartmouth and surrounding areas.

The ICU/CCU is an 8 bed, Intensive Care/Coronary Care Unit that cares for patients aged 16 and older. Patients are on the unit for various lengths of stay.

You will most likely share a room. You may need to share a room with a person of the opposite sex. At times, we need to move patients from one room to another. This is to help with isolation needs, patient, family or other needs.

About our unit

Patients staying in the ICU/CCU need close monitoring because of critical illness or because they have had major surgery. Because of this, some of our routines may be different from other areas of the hospital that you may be more familiar with. Our goal is to give the best care possible to our patients and their families.

We encourage you to ask questions. Admission to the ICU/CCU can be a stressful time. Asking questions may help relieve some of that stress. We try to be open and honest with our answers.
Nurses are at the bedside 24 hrs a day. Our ICU/CCU doctors are available at all times and are typically on the unit from 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

We will keep you informed about your loved one’s condition. If you wish to have a family meeting with the doctor to talk about your family member’s condition, please speak to one of the nurses.

Several patient care pamphlets are available to help you understand ICU procedures and tests. We ask you to give consent for some of these procedures.

**How will my family and friends find out about my care?**

Keeping patient confidentiality and privacy is important to us. Your medical details will only be given to **1 or 2** people you choose. If you can’t choose someone because of your condition, your next of kin or your substitute decision-maker will get details to pass on to the rest of your family and friends.

**Any information about your condition will be only be given to these **1 or 2** people.** This way, everyone gets the same details and mix-ups and/or confusion is less likely.
When can friends and family visit me?

• There are open visiting hours on the unit. We believe that family and friends are important to the healing process. Unless it is urgent, we ask that you **DO NOT visit during shift changes between 6:30-7:30 a.m. and 6:30-7:30 p.m.**

• Depending on the nature of your loved one’s condition or because of the activities of the ICU/CCU, there may be times when we may speak to family and friends about keeping visits short.

• We ask that **only 2 people visit** with each patient at a time. We are a small unit and large groups of visitors can be disruptive to our patients.

• To enter the unit, please use the black phone in the ICU/CCU waiting room (located on the 4 West unit) to **tell the nurses you are coming**. If there is no answer, please wait and call back in 5 minutes. **DO NOT enter the unit without receiving permission from staff because this may interrupt patient care.**

• The patient decides who can visit. If the patient can’t make this decision because of their condition, their next of kin can decide for them.

• We may ask you to leave the patient’s bedside in order to carry out patient care. During these times, please wait in the family waiting room and we will call you when we are finished.

• Please respect the privacy of the other patients in the unit. Do not wander around the unit or ask us questions about other patients.
• Children may visit, but need an adult with them. Because the unit is small, and patients are trying to recover, a visit by a child may not always be in the best interest of the patient or child. Please talk about any concerns you have with one of the nurses.

• The nurses are available 24 hours a day to take phone calls and to answer your questions. Please **DO NOT call during shift changes from 6:30–7:30 a.m. and 6:30–7:30 p.m.** unless you have an urgent issue.

Please remember: NO medical information will be shared over the telephone.

**When are meals served?**

For those who are able to eat and/or drink, meal trays come at these times (approximate):

› **Breakfast:** 8:30 a.m.
› **Lunch:** 12:30 p.m.
› **Dinner:** 5:30 p.m.

When needed, families can help you during meal times. We will support family involvement in meals as needed. Before you bring food in from home, please check with us first. Your family is welcome to take part in your care at any time during the day. This will help you and your family to know more about the care you may need when it is time to go home.

Families can also help you to fill in your menu for your meals. The food that you order on your menu will come the next day.
Food trays are picked up 3 times a day, after each meal. If there is something you want to eat later, put it aside so staff can still pick up your tray.

**Is there a place to lock up my valuables?**
Please leave valuables such as jewelry, cash, and credit cards at home. If you do have valuables on you, send them home with a family member or a friend. If this is not possible, ask us to put them in the hospital safe.

**Do I have to bring personal care items from home?**
Personal care items such as deodorant, toothbrushes, toothpaste, denture cleaner, and shaving cream are not provided by the unit. Please ask family or friends to bring these items for you. All items are to be scent-free. Non-slip shoes and/or slippers, glasses, or hearing aids are important items to have with you.

**Are there any interpreters or translators to help me?**
A qualified interpreter can share important information and relay questions or concerns to your health care team. Language Line gives instant and easy access to qualified interpreters in more than 170 languages. Please let us know if you need this service.
What will a normal day be like?

› 6:30 a.m.–7:30 a.m.: **Nursing shift change**
› 6:30 p.m.–7:30 p.m.: **Nursing shift change**

The intensivist (primary ICU/CCU doctor) and other members of the health care team are present on the unit at various times throughout the day, depending on specific patient care needs. There is a charge nurse/team leader available on each shift. At the beginning and end of each shift, a verbal report is given nurse-to-nurse.

The health care team meets every Monday and Thursday at 10 a.m. to talk about the plan of care for patients and their specific care needs.
Who is part of my health care team?
There are many people here to help you. You may work with a few or a large number of health care team members. This will be based on your care needs. The members of your health care team are each experts in their own area and are listed below:

You and your family
The care, love, and support of family is the best medicine for a sick family member. At your request, we can hold a team conference to talk about your family member’s condition.

Nurses
Our nurses have special training in critical care nursing. During the day, the nurse will talk about the patient’s progress with the health care team. Nurses frequently monitor and assess patients. The nurse to patient ratio will vary from 1 nurse to 1 patient, or 1 nurse for every 2 patients. There is a charge nurse or team leader on all shifts.

Clinical leader/charge nurse
The charge nurse keeps the unit running smoothly. He/she acts as the “go to” person to deal with issues that come up for staff, patients, and your family. The charge nurse is on the unit between 7 a.m.–3 p.m. Monday to Friday.
Dietitian
The role of the dietitian is to make sure you are eating well. He/she can give one-on-one counselling for a range of conditions. He/she works with the speech language pathologist if you have any swallowing problems.

Diet technician
The diet technician helps you choose meals and snacks that you will enjoy and that meet your nutritional needs.

Intensive care doctors
These doctors are specialists in caring for critically ill patients. They direct the care of patients in the ICU. This doctor will review each patient’s condition several times a day. You may meet different ICU staff doctors throughout your family member’s stay.

Palliative care team
A specially trained team helps with:
› Coping with pain and symptoms
› Emotional support
› Plans for both discharge (leaving the hospital) and follow-up after discharge
› End-of-life, comfort, and bereavement (grief) support
Patient representative
The patient representative helps answer any questions you have about your care or experiences at Capital Health. He/she can help prevent problems and work through any concerns you may have. He/she can be reached at (902) 473-2133.

Patient support worker (PSW)/care team assistant (CTA)
The PSW/CTA works under the direction of the Registered Nurse. He/she helps with bathing, turning and positioning, meals, and other needs.

Pharmacist
Pharmacists can offer a plan for safe and effective medication therapy.

Physiotherapist and physiotherapy assistant
The physiotherapy team works with you to improve your strength, balance, and ability to move. They also help you with moving to and from bed. The team may also help with deep breathing and coughing exercises.

Recreation therapist
The recreation therapist works with you to plan leisure and recreation activities to help you meet your goals. He/she helps you to adjust leisure and recreation activities you enjoy.
Therapeutic assistant
The therapeutic assistant supports your care plan using leisure to help you meet your needs.

Registered nurse (RN)
The RN oversees your care. He/she sets up your plan of care and looks for changes in your condition. The RN does in-depth testing and monitoring. He/she gives you your medications, treatments, and looks after your personal care. The RN creates a teaching plan for the licensed practical nurse to carry out.

Respiratory therapist
The respiratory therapist checks, monitors, and treats you if you have any breathing problems. He/she gives oxygen and breathing medications. He/she does breathing tests and teaches you about your breathing problems and treatments. He/she also oversees the breathing machine (ventilator) and may help with the care of an endotracheal tube/tracheostomy tube.

Social worker
The social worker gives supportive counselling to help you cope with concerns about being in the hospital. He/she helps with your discharge plan (plan for when you go home). He/she also connects you to resources in your community.
Speech language pathologist
The speech language pathologist helps you with any communication difficulties. He/she makes suggestions and does testing to help you if you have any swallowing problems.

Spiritual care
A chaplain gives support to you and your family. He/she can help you to connect to spiritual and religious resources in your community.

Unit clerk
The unit clerk greets and directs family and friends who visit the unit. He/she answers calls and questions at the desk. The unit clerk also carries out routine office work.
Equipment

Much of the equipment we use to help care for your family member will be unfamiliar to you. It can be frightening to see it in use. The equipment at each bedside will vary depending on each patient’s diagnosis, illness, and needs.

You will hear different alarms in the unit. Most alarms do not signal an emergency, rather, they are meant to tell staff about potential problems.

Here are some of the things you may see:

Heart monitor
A heart monitor helps us keep a close eye on the rhythm of a patient’s heart.

Arterial lines
An arterial line is a special line placed into an artery. It allows blood samples to be taken often without any discomfort and/or pain. It can also be used to take continuous blood pressure readings.

Oxygen
Patients receive oxygen through a mask or nasal prongs, which must stay in place.
Endotracheal tube
An endotracheal tube is placed into a patient’s windpipe through the mouth or nose. It helps the patient breathe. When in place, the patient cannot talk, eat, or drink because the tube passes through the voice box. This can be very frustrating for the patient. When the tube is taken out, the patient’s voice may be hoarse. It will go back to normal within a few days.

Tracheostomy tube
A tracheostomy tube is placed in the windpipe through a small opening in a patient’s neck. The patient can’t speak when this tube is in place. The endotracheal tube and tracheostomy tubes are also used to suction secretions from the patient’s lungs as needed.

Ventilator
A ventilator is a machine that is attached to the endotracheal or tracheostomy tube. It helps the patient breathe. The nurse and the respiratory therapist will watch the patient and the machine very closely. As the patient’s lungs get better, he/she will slowly be taken off the machine.
How can I prevent infections?
Hand washing is the best way to prevent the spread of germs. Please wash your hands before and after eating, after using the bathroom, and before using the patient kitchen area or ice machine. Ask your visitors to wash their hands before and after they visit you.

What other services are offered?
• There is a kitchen on 4 West where you can make a cup of tea or coffee.
• There is a cordless phone shared among all patients in the ICU.
• Public Internet access and WiFi is available in the Library on level 2. WiFi access is also available in the Getaway Café in the basement on level 1.
• The Getaway Café is open Monday to Friday (7:30 a.m.–3 p.m.) Hot meals are served until 1:30 p.m.
• The Gift Shoppe is found in the main lobby and is run by the Dartmouth General Hospital Auxiliary. Along with gift items, they sell personal care items, newspapers, magazines, and snacks.

Hours of operation:
› Monday to Thursday: 9 a.m.–5 p.m., and evenings 6:30 p.m.–8 p.m.
› Fridays: 9 a.m.–5 p.m.
› Weekends: 2 p.m.–4 p.m.
Where can I park?
Public parking is available at the Dartmouth General site for a fee. Family visiting parking is available for long-term patients. To ask about long-term parking, please call the Dartmouth General Foundation at (902) 465-4149 or you can find their office on the main level.

Questions?
If you have any concerns about your care, please speak to your nurse. If you still have concerns after speaking to your nurse, contact the charge nurse, who can put you in contact with the nurse manager, administrative coordinator, and patient representative. The patient representative can be reached at (902) 473-2133.

If you have questions after leaving the hospital, please contact your family doctor, call 811 (NS Health Telecare Service) OR if it is a medical emergency, call 911 or go to your closest Emergency Department.

If you have any questions, please ask.
We are here to help you.
Looking for more health information?
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.
For more information go to www.library.novascotia.ca

Capital Health promotes a smoke-free and scent-free environment.
Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

Capital Health, Nova Scotia
www.cdha.nshealth.ca

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

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