

Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Patient and Family Guide



~~Cancer~~
UT MD Anderson

Intensive Care Unit (ICU) Patient and Family Guide

Table of Contents

Overview

- ICU Critical Care Team
- Helpful Tips for Your ICU Stay
- Sleep Tips for Your ICU Stay

Activity Goals and Exercises

- Daily Activity Goals for Your ICU Stay
- Breathing Exercise Using the Incentive Spirometer
- Passive Range of Motion Exercises
- Meditation
- Music Therapy
- Relaxation Techniques
- Yogic Breathing Techniques

ICU Diary

- ICU Diary

Caregivers

- ICU Delirium Care Plan for Caregivers
- Caregiver Role in the ICU

ICU Critical Care Team

UT MD Anderson's Intensive Care Unit (ICU) is a special part of the hospital for people who need close monitoring and support due to a serious illness or injury. Key features of the ICU include:

- Care is provided 24 hours a day, 7 days a week from specially trained doctors, nurses and other members of the care team.
- Advanced machines are available to help with breathing, heart function and other vital signs.
- Special treatments are available for serious conditions like infections, injuries or after major surgery.
- The number of visitors allowed is limited. This is done to keep the unit quiet and reduce the risk of infection.

The goal of the ICU is to help you recover enough to move to a regular hospital room or to go home.

Care Team

The ICU critical care team are doctors, nurses and others from many departments. They provide special, intensive medical care if you become very sick and need to be watched closely **at all times**. Your primary cancer team will continue to provide your cancer care, manage your cancer treatment and provide follow-up care. In the ICU, both teams work together to take care of your medical needs.

You will have many people on your care team and it can be hard to remember each person's role. Here is an overview of who is on your team and the care they give to you in the ICU.

Attending Doctor

The ICU attending doctor is a critical care specialist who oversees medical problems causing your critical illness. Your attending doctor will:

- Coordinate medical care related to your medical problems.
- Consult with other specialists to help with your care.
- Put into action a treatment care plan based on feedback from your care team.

Advanced Practice Provider (APP)

Advanced practice providers (APPs) are licensed members of the care team. They can be an advanced practice registered nurse (APRN) or physician assistant (PA). APPs work closely with all members of the care team to manage your care, perform medical exams and certain procedures, diagnose illnesses, manage treatment plans and write prescriptions.

Nurses

ICU nurses have special training to care for patients with critical illness. The ICU nurses provide daily care and monitor how you are doing. Your nurse will:

- Give you medicine.
- Monitor the equipment alarms in your room.
- Provide care based on your doctor's orders and contact your doctor if your condition changes.
- Assist the attending doctor and APP with coordinating care for your medical issues.

Respiratory Therapist

A respiratory therapist treats and helps prevent breathing problems. The therapist monitors vitals, breathing patterns and adjusts oxygen and respiratory equipment. This includes using X-rays, different gases, medicine and breathing equipment for respiratory problems.

Pharmacist

The pharmacist manages your medicines, takes part in daily patient rounds and works with the ICU team to decide which drug treatments are best for you. They also make sure you safely receive the correct medicines at the right time.

Social Work Counselor

These counselors help you and your family with many matters such as coping, caregiving, advanced care planning, discussion of goals, finances and survivorship. They also share information on community resources.

Case Manager

A case manager works with your care team to find services you may need. They may ask you questions early on in your stay to help plan for your needs at home. Case managers also send information to your insurance provider to explain the care you need.

Chaplains

Chaplains are available 24 hours a day and serve all faith traditions. They help patients and family members with spiritual support and pastoral care. Ask your nurse if you would like to speak with a chaplain.

Clinical Ethics

When you are getting treatment for cancer, tough decisions can come up. These decisions may involve what you want, what your family believes or what doctors feel is the right thing to do. Clinical Ethics is a service that helps you talk through these choices, understand different points of view and find solutions. They can also help lead family meetings and give advice.

Patient Advocate

Patient advocates help you with any concerns you may have. They also provide information about available resources and services for you and your family. You can call them when you are unsure where to go with questions.

Speech Language Pathologist

A speech language pathologist can help if you have trouble swallowing or communicating. They can work with you and your family to improve these skills as needed. This may include:

- Tests to evaluate your swallowing.
- Recommendations for easy to swallow foods and drinks.
- Help with speech, language and thinking skills to help improve everyday communication.
- Teaching you and your family how to manage speech and language challenges.

Rehabilitation Services

Occupational and physical therapists are specialists who help you regain skills and improve your quality of life.

Occupational Therapist (OT)

In the ICU, an OT helps you get back to everyday activities. They make a care plan for your physical, social and emotional needs. This may include the following:

- Strengthen your hands and use splints if needed.
- Assist you with daily tasks like brushing teeth, bathing and getting dressed.
- Set a routine and teach you ways to save energy.
- Show you relaxation and coping strategies.
- Help you with strategies for good sleep and preventing ICU delirium.
- Support you and your family with daily care and planning.
- Recommend ongoing therapy and medical equipment, like shower chairs.

Physical Therapist (PT)

In the ICU, a PT helps you stay active and build strength during illness. They make a care plan to support your movement and recovery, which may include the following:

- Helping you get moving when the ICU team says it is safe to do so.
- Recommend exercises to improve strength and flexibility.
- Assess your need for equipment like braces or supports.
- Teach you ways to save and manage your energy.
- Provide care for swelling, called lymphedema.
- Guide you and your family in daily care.
- Recommend ongoing therapy after the ICU.
- Recommend medical equipment, like walkers or canes and how to get them.

Helpful Tips for Your ICU Stay

In the ICU, it is important that you stay as active and engaged as possible to prevent delirium, weakness and support your overall well-being. Even if it feels like you cannot do your normal activities, there are still lots of things you can try with a little help.

These activities can all be done in your room. If needed, ask for help moving your lines, drains, tubes and wires so you can be more active in the ICU. If you need any suggestions on how to help you move better, talk to your occupational or physical therapist.

Routine

- Keep the lights on and window shades open during the day to get more natural light.
- Try and keep a routine of daily activity with help from your family and care team. Use the Daily Activity Goals for Your ICU Stay section in this guide. You can also create your own goals based on what is important to you.
- Use a communication or dry erase board if you cannot speak to communicate your needs.
 - Ask your care team for a speech or occupational therapy consult if you need help with other options for communication.
- Write down 3 things you would like to do even if they seem impossible.
 - Have someone from your care team post them up in your room.
 - Let all members of your care team know what is important to you.

Activities

- Have your family bring in items from home that give you comfort, such as:
 - Photos.
 - Blankets and pillows.
 - Cards from family and friends.
 - Electronic devices and chargers such as tablet, headphones, fitness watch, media streaming device or wireless speakers. A UT MD Anderson iPad is available for you to use in your room, upon request.
 - Crafts.
 - Books and movies.
- Video chat with your family and friends.
- Do activities that you enjoy:
 - Read books or magazines.
 - Listen to your favorite music or audio books.
 - Do crossword puzzles, Sudoku, word searches, puzzles or crafts.
 - Play games or cards.
 - Journal or write letters.
 - Ask your care team for available resources and activities you can do.
- Ask to get out of bed so you can work with physical or occupational therapy. If you cannot get out of bed, the nurses can adjust your bed so it sits up like a chair.
- Do the exercises provided to you from your rehabilitation team.

Sleep Tips for Your ICU Stay

Getting good sleep helps your body and mind heal, especially when you are sick or recovering from surgery. Sleep makes your immune system stronger, helps you feel less stressed and can lift your mood and improve thinking.

While in the ICU, sleep helps your body repair itself, makes pain easier to handle and supports recovery. People who sleep well often heal faster and have fewer problems. That is why sleep is a big part of getting better.

Why Sleep is Hard in the ICU

The ICU is a busy place. There are lights, loud beeps from machines and nurses and doctors coming in and out of your room. All of these things can make it hard to sleep. To help you sleep better in the ICU, patients, families and hospital staff can work together. It is important to speak up and tell your care team what you need.

Even though the ICU can be busy and loud, try these tips to get better sleep.

Be Active During the Day

- Stay awake during the day to help sleep better at night.
- Open blinds and turn on lights during the day.
- If allowed, sit up in a chair or go on short walks in the ICU unit.
 - Walks and light activity may also be part of your OT and PT sessions.
 - If needed, ask the nurse to put your bed in a chair position instead of flat.
- Keep naps short, limited to about 20 minutes.

Follow a Sleep Routine

- Go to bed at the same time each night.
- Tell the staff your bedtime and ask for quiet time.
- Do relaxing things like deep breathing, praying or listening to music.
- Wash your face, brush teeth and comb your hair.
- Turn off TV and devices 1 hour before sleep.

Get Comfortable

- Ask nurses to help adjust your bed and pillows.
- Use extra blankets or pillows to feel cozy.

Make the Room Calm

- Use an eye mask to block bright lights. Ask your nurse for one, if needed.
- Ask staff to dim the room lights at night.

- Ask staff to schedule tests, procedures and activities during the day instead of at bedtime.
- Play soft music or white noise using your phone or tablet.
- Bring cozy items like your own pillow or blanket.

Block Out Noise

- Ask for earplugs or use your own personal noise-canceling headphones.
- Shut the door to your room, if allowed.
- Ask nurses to group their check-ins so you are not woken up as often.
- See if machine alarms can be turned away from the bed.

Manage Pain and Feelings

- Let your care team know if you are feeling sad or anxious so they can help.
- Try calming practices like slow, deep breathing or muscle relaxation.
- Listen to soft music or peaceful sounds.
- Talk with family or ask for spiritual support if you feel nervous.
- Write down your thoughts in the diary provided to you.

Use Medicine Safely

- If you still cannot sleep, ask your doctor about medicine to help you sleep.
- Do not drink beverages that contain caffeine in the afternoon or evening.

Ask Family to Help

- If it is okay, have a loved one stay to help keep the room peaceful.
- Ask family to keep visits short at bedtime and help keep things quiet.

Daily Activity Goals for Your ICU Stay

Create a daily schedule to help set activity goals or plan your day. Staying active and keeping a routine as much as possible can help prevent ICU delirium and weakness.

Here is an example of a typical schedule you can follow during your ICU stay. Be sure to partner with your occupational therapist to create a personal plan for your daily activities.

Examples of Daily Activity Goals

Morning

- ☐ Turn on the lights and raise the window shades by 8 a.m.
- ☐ Ask care team to adjust my bed so it sits up like a chair. This will help my body get used to being active again and make it easier to start getting out of bed.
- ☐ Complete my grooming routine of washing face, brushing teeth and combing hair.
- ☐

Noon

- ☐ Spend time out of bed. Ask my nurse for help or work with my occupational or physical therapist.
- ☐ Do a leisure activity like a game, puzzle, craft or read.
- ☐ Video chat or call family and friends.
- ☐

Evening

- ☐ Watch a movie or try a relaxation technique.
- ☐ Repeat my grooming routine.
- ☐ Write in my ICU diary to reflect on the day.
- ☐

My Daily Activity Goals

Morning

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Noon

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Evening

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

My Daily Activity Goals

Morning

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Noon

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Evening

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

My Daily Activity Goals

Morning

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Noon

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Evening

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

My Daily Activity Goals

Morning

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Noon

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Evening

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

Breathing Exercise Using the Incentive Spirometer

An incentive spirometer is a device to help improve your breathing. Doing deep breathing exercises will expand your lungs and prevent breathing problems, such as pneumonia after surgery. This exercise also improves your ability to clear mucus from your lungs. The spirometer should be used every 60 minutes while you are awake or as directed by your care team.

How to Use an Incentive Spirometer

1. Sit upright in a chair, if you are able, or raise the head of your bed to a sitting position to perform this exercise. **If you are concerned about sitting up, talk to your nurse.**
2. Hold the incentive spirometer upright in front of you.
3. Exhale normally.
4. Place your lips firmly around the mouthpiece.
5. Breathe in slowly to raise the indicator to the section between the 2 arrows. **Image 1**
6. Keep breathing in and then hold your breath so the indicator stays in place for at least 4 to 6 seconds. **Image 2**
7. Remove your lips from the mouthpiece and exhale slowly.

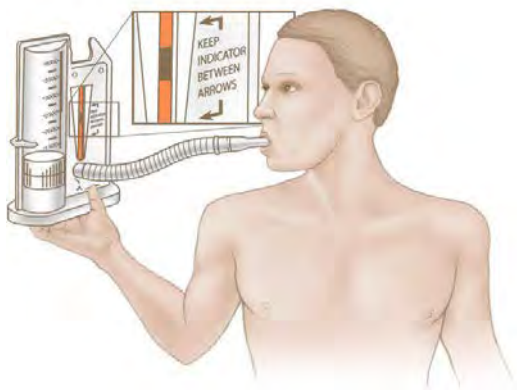


Image 1. Keep indicator between the 2 arrows.

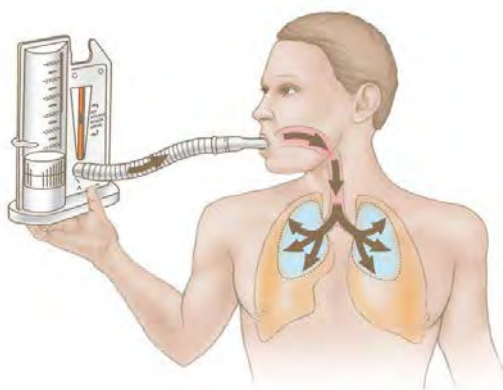


Image 2. Hold indicator in place for 4 to 6 seconds.

Helpful Tips

- Rest for 5 to 10 seconds between each breathing exercise.
- If you start to feel dizzy or have tingling or numbness in your fingers, take a longer rest break between each deep breath.
- Do 10 to 20 deep breaths each time you use your incentive spirometer.

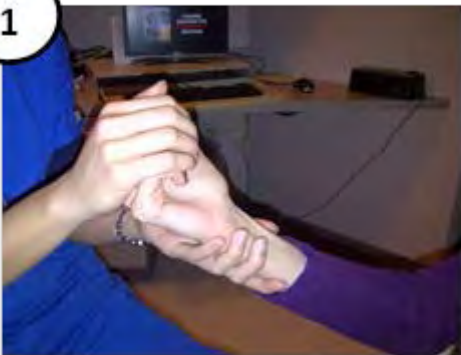
Passive Range of Motion Exercises

- Before you begin, have your nurse help move lines or tubes that might be in the way.
- Slowly perform each exercise 10 times.
- Stop the exercise if you feel resistance.

Upper Body Exercises

Finger Flexion or Extension

1



Elbow Flexion or Extension

2



Shoulder Internal or External Rotation

3



Shoulder Flexion or Extension

4



Shoulder Adduction or Abduction

5



Lower Body Exercises

Ankle Plantarflexion or Dorsiflexion

1



Hip Flexion or Extension

2



Hip Adduction or Abduction

3



Hip Internal or External Rotation

4



Knee Flexion or Extension

5



Meditation

Meditation calms your mind and body. It helps focus your attention and concentration. It also clears your mind of unwanted thoughts and feelings. This can lead to a higher level of joy and awareness in life. There are 2 main types of meditation:

- **Concentration:** Focus your mind by concentrating on a single object. This calms your mind when it is jumping from one thought to another.
- **Mindfulness:** Take a non-judgmental view of the thoughts that go through your mind. Allow them to come and go without concentrating on them.

Concentration

To practice concentration meditation, find a quiet place. Sit in a comfortable chair and close your eyes. Follow the steps below:

1. Relax your muscles and breathe in and out, slowly and naturally.
2. Mentally focus on an object, such as your breathing, a word, phrase, image or prayer. When starting out, choose a word or phrase, such as “peace” or “one.”
3. Each time you breathe out, say the word or phrase.

Practice meditation one time a day for about 10 to 20 minutes. As you learn meditation, try to focus on different objects to find the one that works best for you. Some people find it easier to focus their minds by looking at a picture, rather than saying a word.

Mindfulness

Often in life, people think about the past or the future. Their mind jumps from one thought to another. Mindfulness is about keeping your attention on the present moment, without judgement. The purpose of mindfulness is to take you off “autopilot” and become more fully aware of the present.

By simply observing what is going on around you, with no intention of changing or acting on it, you are training your mind to be calm and aware. Observe and accept life in this way, even with its frustrations and disappointments. Aim to become calmer, clearer and more compassionate in your thoughts and actions. To start practice this exercise for 5 minutes. As you become better able to focus on the present, practice it for 10 or 20 minutes.

After you learn the skill of mindfulness, it is easy to make it part of your daily life. Focus on other things rather than your breathing. When you go for a walk, focus on the way your legs and feet move and how they feel against the ground. Whenever your mind drifts off, observe the thoughts and then return your focus to walking. You can apply mindfulness when you eat, shower, run errands or play with children. Over time, mindfulness becomes a way of life, as you learn to become more fully aware of the present.

Visit [MDAnderson.org/Wellness](https://www.mdanderson.org/Wellness) for meditation recordings.

Music Therapy

Music therapy is the use of music to address different patient needs. These needs may include support to help you:

- Lower anxiety
- Manage pain and discomfort
- Improve mood
- Restore functional skills
- Make human connections
- Express emotions
- Relax

A board-certified music therapist (MT-BC) leads individual and group music therapy. During music therapy you may listen to, write, play or sing music. You do not need any experience or background in music to take part.

Working with a Therapist

Your doctor may refer you to the Integrative Medicine Center, where you can get a referral for music therapy. Working one-on-one with a music therapist may be part of your integrative medicine care plan. Custom music therapy plans can be created for you, whether you are an inpatient or outpatient.

The therapist evaluates you or the group, then adjusts methods based on your needs. The therapist considers your preferred type of music. They also change the amount of contact to match your energy levels.

Examples of methods are:

- **Lyric discussion** – Listen to preferred songs played live, talk about the meaning of the lyrics, melody or theme to lower anxiety, improve mood and express emotions.
- **Mindfulness and music** – Use of guided imagery, breathing or meditation with music to ease stress or pain. Often music is created in real time to support custom guided imagery.
- **Active music making** – Sing and play an instrument to lower stress, improve mood and increase energy.
- **Songwriting** – Create original lyrics, melodies and sound for self-expression.
- **Family music making** – Make music as a family to strengthen relationships.
- **Neurologic music therapy** – Move or sing to steady rhythms to support rehabilitation and increase independence in day-to-day activities. Occupational, physical or speech therapists often help with this.

Free group classes, based in music therapy, are open to patients and caregivers. An inpatient rehab group, which includes music therapy, is available for stem cell transplant inpatients in the main hospital. The outpatient music therapy group is called Connect and Reflect with Music. All outpatient classes are virtual.

Resources

- American Music Therapy Association: <https://www.MusicTherapy.org/About/MusicTherapy/>
- ASCO Post Music Therapy: Relevance in Oncology: <http://www.ASCOpost.com/Issues/July-25-2017/Music-Therapy-Relevance-in-Oncology/>
- The Academy of Neurologic Music Therapy: <https://NMTAcademy.co/home/clinic/>

Relaxation Techniques

Relaxation is needed for good health. It gives your body and mind a chance to rest and recover from high-stress situations. Your heart rate slows down, blood pressure decreases and muscles relax. Relaxation exercises can improve anxiety, pain, fatigue and sleep.

You can try different ways to relax since everyone experiences stress differently. What relaxes you may not relax someone else. Try some of the following ideas to find what works for you.

Quick and Easy Relaxation Tips

Relaxation does not always require a practiced technique. Opportunities exist every day to relax. Try a few of these:

- Take a hot bath.
- Curl up and read a good book.
- Get a massage.
- Watch a favorite TV show.
- Go for a walk.
- Play with a pet.
- Listen to your favorite music.
- Do some arts or crafts.
- Lie outside and watch the clouds.
- Chat with a positive friend or family member.

The Quieting Reflex

When a stressful situation occurs, practice this 6-second mini-relaxation technique:

1. Become aware of what is annoying you. Is it the ringing telephone or an urge to smoke? Whatever it is, decide that you need to relax and start the technique.
2. Silently say the phrase “**alert mind, calm body**” to yourself. Continue to repeat this phrase.
3. Smile inwardly with your eyes and your mouth. An inward smile is more of a feeling than an expression someone may notice. This stops the muscles in your face from tightening up in an angry expression.
4. Inhale slowly while you count to 3. Imagine the breath comes from the bottom of your feet.
5. Exhale slowly. Imagine your breath moving back down your legs and out through your feet. Let your jaw and shoulder muscles go limp.

Be sure to practice this technique several times a day and when a stressful moment occurs. After a few months, it becomes an automatic response to stress. This technique was created by Charles Stoebel, PhD.

Deep Breathing

One of the easiest relaxation techniques is deep breathing. It only takes a few moments and you can use it wherever you are.

To breathe deeply, breathe from your lower belly or abdomen and not from your chest. To check if you are deep breathing, place one hand on your chest and one hand on your belly button. Take a normal breath. If the hand on your chest rises the most, you are breathing from your chest. If the hand on your belly button rises the most, you are breathing from your abdomen.

Breathe in a slow, controlled manner to relax your body. Follow the steps below to practice deep breathing.

1. Get into a comfortable position and close your eyes. You can sit in a chair or lie down on your back with your knees bent. Loosen your belt or any tight clothing.
2. Place your hands over your belly button.
3. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, filling your abdomen with air. Your hands on your belly button should rise.
4. Let all the air out slowly through your nose or mouth. Your hands on your belly button should lower as you breathe out.
5. Continue to breathe in and out with long, slow, deep breaths. Focus on the sound and feel of your breathing. Notice you become more relaxed.



If you feel lightheaded or dizzy, you may be breathing too quickly. Focus on slowing down your breathing.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation shows you the difference between how it feels when your muscles are tense and when they are relaxed. When your muscles are relaxed, your mind and body will be relaxed also.

Tense and relax muscle groups one at a time. When you tense your muscles, do not tense too tightly because this may cause cramping. Follow the instructions below. Tense and relax your muscles in this order:

1. Hands and arms
2. Head and face
3. Chest, back and shoulders
4. Abdomen and buttocks
5. Legs and feet

To begin, find a quiet place where you will not be disturbed. Loosen any tight clothing and untie your shoes. Sit in a comfortable chair that supports your head. Place both feet flat on the floor.

1. Tense all your muscles in the first muscle group – your hands and arms. Concentrate on what the tension feels like. Keep your muscles tense for 5 seconds.
2. Breathe in deeply from your abdomen.
3. As you breathe out, let go of the tension in the muscles of your hands and arms. Let your muscles go completely limp and relaxed.

4. Repeat these steps 2 times or until the muscle group feel relaxed. Then, move on to the next muscle group.
5. Once you have gone through the steps to tense and relax all the muscle groups, continue your deep breathing. Enjoy the feeling of relaxation throughout your whole body.

Practice progressive muscle relaxation every day. Be patient. It may be hard at first, but with practice you will be able to quickly relax the muscles in your body.

Meditation

Meditation calms your mind and body. It helps focus your attention and concentration. It also clears your mind of unwanted thoughts and feelings. This can lead to a higher level of joy and awareness in life.

There are 2 main types of meditation:

- **Concentration:** Focus your mind by concentrating on a single object. This calms your mind when it is jumping from one thought to another.
- **Mindfulness:** Take a non-judgmental view of the thoughts that go through your mind. Allow them to come and go without concentrating on them.

Concentration

To practice concentration meditation, find a quiet place. Sit in a comfortable chair and close your eyes.

1. Relax your muscles and breathe in and out, slowly and naturally.
2. Mentally focus on a single thing, like your breathing, a word, phrase or image. When starting out, choose a word or phrase, such as “peace” or “om.”
3. Each time you breathe out, say the word or phrase.

Do not be upset if you cannot focus for more than a few seconds. This is normal. As thoughts run through your mind, simply observe them and then return your focus. With practice, you will gain more control.

Practice meditation one time a day for 10 to 20 minutes. As you learn meditation, try focusing on different things to find what works best for you. Some people find it easier to focus their minds by looking at an object rather than saying a word.

Mindfulness

Often in life, people think about the past or the future. Their mind jumps from one thought to another. Mindfulness is about keeping your attention on the present moment, without judgement. The purpose of mindfulness is to take you off “autopilot” and become more fully aware of the present.

By simply observing what is going on around you, with no intention of changing or acting on it, you train your mind to be calm and aware. Accept life in this way, even with its frustrations and disappointments. Aim to become more calm, clear and compassionate in your thoughts and actions.

Try the following exercise to learn how to use mindfulness in your everyday life. Start by sitting in a comfortable place.

6. Concentrate on a single thing, such as your breathing. Focus on the feeling of the air as it passes in and out of your nose with each breath. Do not try to control your breathing by speeding it up or slowing it down. Just observe it as it is.
7. Your mind will quickly drift off to thinking about something else. When this happens, observe where your thoughts went. Was it a memory, a worry about the future or a feeling of impatience? Then return your attention to your breathing.
8. Pay attention to what your body experiences in the present moment. What do you hear, smell, taste? Feel your body against the chair. Use your senses to help bring you into your body in the present moment.
9. Each time a thought or feeling comes to mind, observe what it is, then return to your breathing. Try not to judge or act on the thought or feeling. Practice mindfulness, breath by breath.

Start out practicing this exercise for 5 minutes. As you become better able to focus on the present, practice it for 10 or 20 minutes.

Once you learn the skill of mindfulness, it is easy to make it part of your daily life. You can focus on other things rather than your breathing. When you go for a walk, focus on the way your legs and feet move and how they feel against the ground. Whenever your mind drifts off, observe the thoughts and then return your focus to walking. Apply mindfulness to many activities in life, such as eating, showering, running errands or playing with children. Over time, mindfulness becomes a way of life, as you learn to become more fully aware of the present.

Imagery

Guided Imagery

Guided imagery uses your mind to recreate and enjoy a situation or environment that you find relaxing. Imagine yourself in a pleasant or calming setting, such as a favorite vacation spot or with someone whose company you enjoy. It is like focused daydreaming and can be especially helpful for people with vivid imaginations. It is limited only by your creativity.

Use all of your senses. For example, imagine a day at the beach – hear the sound of the waves, the smell of the ocean, the taste of a cool glass of lemonade, the warmth of the sun and so on.

You can also use imagery along with deep breathing. As you practice deep breathing, use calming mental images to relax further. Imagine that each breath has a calming effect as it goes throughout your body. For example, on a hot, sunny day, imagine cool, refreshing breaths.

Behavioral Rehearsal Imagery

Behavioral rehearsal imagery is when you rehearse for a situation. For example, if you have questions about your treatment and are nervous about asking your doctor, write down the questions you have and practice asking them in your mind or out loud with a friend. When you rehearse a situation, you mentally prepare what you will say and do. This allows you to feel more in control and more confident. It also reduces stress so that you stay relaxed in a stressful situation.

Resources

Integrative Medicine Center

The Integrative Medicine Center aims to improve cancer care and quality of life. Programs are open to patients, their family members and caregivers. Approaches focus on the mind, body and spirit. Join a free group program, such as meditation, yoga, music therapy and more. Massage and acupuncture also are available for a fee.

For more information about the Integrative Medicine Center, call 832-750-3685.

The Learning Center

The Learning Center is a patient education library. Library staff provide current and reliable information on cancer prevention, treatment, coping and general health. Visit a location Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.:

- Theodore N. Law Learning Center, Main Building, Floor 4, 713-745-8063
- Levitt Family Learning Center, Mays Clinic, Floor 2, 713-563-8010

Yogic Breathing Techniques

Breathing is one of the easiest and best ways to manage stress, reduce anxiety and pain and improve your mood. Yoga has many breathing practices that are very beneficial for your health. This handout covers some breathing techniques for you to try.

How to Begin

Posture

Begin by getting into a comfortable posture. Sit upright with you back and neck aligned on a chair or firm seat. Many factors can affect your breathing. An open posture, with your chest expanded and your shoulders relaxed allows your muscles in the upper body to function fully and utilizes your lungs and respiratory system fully. This can also be done while lying on your back.

Abdominal Breathing

Abdominal breathing is also called diaphragmatic breathing. Place one hand on your belly and one on your chest. Inhale deeply until your chest and abdomen fully expand. Slowly begin to exhale through your nose until you empty your lungs fully. Breathing in this way, for at least 5 minutes, can bring about a difference in your overall mood.

Extend the Exhale

The simplest breathing exercise for calming both the nervous system and an overworked mind is a timed way of breathing. When you breathe this way, you exhale longer than you inhale. Inhale through your nose for 2 to 3 seconds. Feel the air move into your abdomen and feel your stomach move out. Breathe out slowly for 3 to 6 seconds through your nostrils. Be careful not to strain and slowly work on extending your exhale.

Breathing with Sounds

Another way to extend your exhale is to use sounds with breathing. Place one hand on your belly and one on your chest. Slowly begin to inhale through your nose until you fill your lungs. When you are ready to exhale make the sounds “AAHHH” as long as you can. Repeat this 5 times. You can also try the sounds “UUUUHH” and “MMMMM”. Focus on the sound and feel of your breathing. Do this several times in a day as needed.

ICU Diary

Being in the ICU can be confusing and stressful. A diary helps you remember important moments and notice your progress. It can help you remember things more clearly, see the progress you are making and feel more comfortable.

There are no rules. You can write whatever you want. Try these ideas to get started:

- Write about what went well or what was hard today. Think about your health or your feelings.
- Write down the names of doctors, nurses and other members of your care team who came by and what they said.
- Talk about visits from family or friends.
- Celebrate steps in recovery, like standing up, sitting in a chair or doing something creative.
- Share how you felt today – happy, tired, scared, strong or any other feelings you had.

Daily Diary

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Date _____

Caregiver Role in the ICU

Providing support to someone in the ICU is hard. It can be both physically and emotionally exhausting. To stay strong and be helpful, it is important that you take care of yourself and find ways to connect with your loved one.

Here are some ways to stay engaged and supportive.

Caring for Your Loved One

- Ask the care team for items that help with comfort and care like grooming and hygiene supplies, sleep mask, ear plugs, warm blanket or arts and craft supplies.
- Stick to a daily routine and help your loved one meet small goals.
- Help with simple grooming tasks like brushing teeth, washing their face and combing hair.
- Gently stretch your loved one's arms and legs every day to help with movement. This is called passive range of motion. If you are unsure how, ask for a physical therapy consult.
- Check with medical staff before applying lotion or offering a gentle massage.
- You can request occupational therapy help create a daily care routine.

Spend Meaningful Time Together

Feeling close still matters, even in the ICU. Try activities that bring joy and connection. You can do all these things right at the bedside, even if your loved one is not able to respond.

- Play music. Make a playlist with songs linked to fun memories.
- Watch a movie together using the room TV or on your device.
- Chat about what is going on with family and friends.
- Pick up a simple craft from the MD Anderson Art Space in the Main Building and do it together. If your loved one cannot help, work nearby and talk with them as you create.
- If faith is important, ask to talk to a chaplain.

Keep a Diary

Use the ICU diary in this booklet or a notes app on your device to write down daily events and thoughts. It can help you make sense of the experience later on.

Stay Informed

Write down updates and questions during care team rounding or consults so you can keep track of medical details.

Ask for Support

You are not alone. If you feel overwhelmed or need help, talk to a social work counselor.

ICU Delirium Care Plan for Caregivers

Delirium is a common condition for patients in the ICU. It causes confusion and makes it hard for a patient to think clearly, focus, remember things or understand what is going on around them. It can affect both the mind and the body.

Causes of Delirium

- Certain medicines, like sedatives
- Pain or illness
- Not sleeping well
- Lying still for long periods
- Unfamiliar environment
- Less oxygen reaching the brain
- Being on a breathing machine

Signs of Delirium

- Movement that is not normal, like trembling or pulling at clothes
- Acting differently than usual
- Suddenly angry or very quiet
- Changes in sleep
- Seeming confused or forgetful
- Changes in emotions
- Seeing things that are not there, hallucinations
- Trouble following instructions or paying attention
- Saying things that do not make sense
- Not knowing where they are or what time it is

How to Help Your Loved One

Delirium may come on quickly and change from day to day. It may last for a few days or up to a week. These tips can help you support your loved one to stay connected and recover, even if they seem sleepy or upset.

Make Communication Clearer

- Use soft voices and simple words.
- Stay encouraging and gentle.
- Do not correct. Try guiding or changing the subject instead.
- Show care through touch or by sitting nearby.
- Ask for help from a speech or occupational therapists for different ways to communicate.

Help Them Stay Oriented

- Tell them the day, time and whether it is morning or night.
- Ease their mind and let them know they are safe.
- Place clocks and calendars where they can easily see them. Talk about where they are and what is happening.
- Talk about updates from family and friends.
- Keep an ICU diary to track experiences.
- Ask everyone to speak directly to your loved one and explain what they are doing.

Support Better Sleep

- Keep them awake and alert during the day. Keep the window blinds open and turn on lights.
- Make the room calm and quiet at night.
- Help them relax with pillows and night routines.
- Bring personal pillows and blankets.
- Use sound machines such as white noise.

Keep Them Connected

- Make sure they have glasses, hearing aids or dentures.
- Visit often and speak to them even if they do not seem to understand.
- Bring pictures and mementos from home.
- Play favorite music, movies or shows.
- Arrange video calls with friends and family.

Boost Mental Activity

If they can take part, these ideas can help keep their mind active:

- Use coloring books or do simple art projects.
- Try deep breathing or calming imagery.
- Read books or listen to audiobooks.
- Play games or do puzzles.
- Fill out a calendar or journal together.
- Create a simple daily routine with small goals.
- Encourage therapy - physical, speech or occupational.
- Help them sit in a chair to wake up their body. Ask staff to help, if needed.

Resources

For more help or to create a custom plan, ask for a consult with occupational therapy. Find more information at <https://www.icudelirium.org/patients-and-families/overview>.

