Taking Care of Yourself
Having a family member in a Critical Care Unit can be extremely stressful. The patient’s condition may change from one visit to the next. You may be full of hope one day, and the next day be filled with anxiety. It’s helpful if you can express your emotions, which may well include fear and anger. Share your feelings with our staff, other family members, friends and even other visitors. Sometimes visitors form a helpful support network for each other.

Even though you may be preoccupied with the health of your loved one, it’s important that you also consider your own health and well-being. It’s a good idea to get enough sleep, eat regularly, exercise, and spend time away from the hospital setting.

You may find comfort in speaking with the primary nurse, social services, and/or clergy member during this difficult time. If you would like to schedule a meeting with one of these trained counselors, please ask the nurse.

Working Together
Our healthcare professionals are proud of the quality medical and nursing care they provide. Please remember that we consider you to be a member of our treatment team. The emotional support and encouragement you provide are equally important to the patient.

Cell Phone Usage
Please limit cell phone usage to the hallways, as they can affect our equipment.

Notes:
The Critical Care Units
The Critical Care Units at Faxton-St. Luke’s Healthcare are places where advanced technology and medical expertise come together to provide care for the most seriously-ill patients. Activity on the unit is continuous and includes patient assessments, treatments, medications, lab tests, X-rays, and other procedures at all hours of the day and night.

This brochure is designed to familiarize you with our Critical Care Units so you can help us take the best care of your loved one. If you have any questions or concerns, please share them with us.

The Critical Care Unit Patient
Patients admitted to the Critical Care Units may be recovering from major surgery or may be victims of accidents, heart attacks, strokes or other serious medical conditions. The one thing they have in common is that they require maximum medical attention and highly-specialized nursing care.

The Critical Care Unit Staff
The ratio of staff to patients is greater in our Critical Care Units than on other units because of the intensive level of care required. In addition to highly-skilled physicians and nurses, the treatment team may include respiratory therapists, X-ray and laboratory technicians, pharmacists, therapists, and dietitians.

Obtaining Information
You will probably have many questions about the patient’s condition and prognosis. It’s a good idea to write down questions as they occur to you. We recommend you appoint one spokesperson who can communicate with our staff and share information with other family members and friends.

Telephone numbers are:
St. Luke’s Campus’ First Floor Intensive Care Unit - (315)624-6113
St. Luke’s Campus’ Second Floor Critical Care Unit - (315)624-6473

To protect patient confidentiality, when you call to check on a patient, only a staff report can be given. Also in the interest of patient confidentiality, specific lab reports are not given. Also in the interest of patient confidentiality, specific lab and test results cannot be given over the phone.

If you wish to speak with the doctor and he or she is not available when you call or visit, please give the nurse a telephone number and a time when the doctor may contact you.

Our Visiting Policy
We understand the desire for family members and/or significant others to be nearby when a loved one is in our Critical Care Unit. Therefore, it is our policy to allow open visiting with a few restrictions outlined below that are appropriate for a unit that cares for seriously-ill patients.

We ask that only immediate family members/significant others visit the patient - two or three at a time - and that visitors be 12 years of age or older.

When not in the patient’s room visiting, we ask that you return to the waiting room to ensure the privacy of all patients in the critical care unit.

Visiting hours in our critical care units are:
8:00am - 5:30pm
7:30pm - 9:00pm

Any other restrictions on visiting are based entirely on the needs of the patient. Short visits are preferred since many patients need rest as part of their recovery. Periods for rest and treatments may require that nursing staff limit visiting. Please speak with the primary nurse or associate if you have any questions about our policy.

Faxton-St. Luke’s Healthcare has instituted a quiet hour during which noise, visitation and unnecessary stimulation are limited throughout the facility.

What to Expect
Having visitors can play an important role in the healing process. Even though patients may be too weak to speak, they are often aware when a familiar voice speaks to them. When you talk, try to speak as normally as possible. Avoid touching the patient; this can be very comforting.

Don’t be concerned if you see the patient’s hands loosely tied to the bedside. These restraints are simply to ensure that equipment will not become disconnected during sleep or in periods of restlessness. Restraints are much safer for the patient than having to replace lifesaving tubes.

The Equipment
During your visit to the Critical Care Unit, you may notice several pieces of equipment in the room. Each of these sophisticated machines serve a specific and vital purpose. Some of the equipment commonly found in the ICU includes:

The Ventilator
The ventilator can be noisy, and to some patients, uncomfortable. However, this machine may be life-saving. If the patient’s breathing pattern changes from the preset rhythm of the respirator, an alarm will sound. Because of the sensitivity of this machine, it may need frequent adjustment. Patients are unable to talk when on a respirator. Please refrain from asking questions that the patient may be unable to answer.

Tubes and Wires
Electrodes and wires link the patient to equipment that monitors cardiac rhythm, blood pressure and other vital signs. Intravenous (IV) tubes transport medication and nutrients. If the patient is unable to take food by mouth, a tube may carry liquid food directly to the stomach. Another tube (a catheter) may be inserted into the bladder if the patient is too weak to use a bedpan.

The Monitor
The monitor records the patient’s heart rhythms and other vital signs. It can be viewed at the bedside and is also at the nurse’s station. An alarm will sound if there is a change in the patient’s condition. The alarm will sometimes be triggered if the patient moves. The nurses who watch the monitors can identify the different patterns and respond immediately if there is a problem.

What to Bring
Get well cards, notes, photographs and other reminders of home may be posted on the bulletin board in the patient’s room.

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