

## **Eating and Drinking**

Since being ill you may have lost your appetite or find that your sense of taste has changed. Your sense of smell may also be altered, which could discourage you from eating. These changes are temporary and should return to normal with time.

Eating small meals may be easier, with nourishing snacks or drinks in-between your meal times. Dietitians are available to discuss your diet and offer advice for you to follow once home.

## **Changes in Your Appearance and Voice**

Your appearance may have changed as a result of your illness. You may have lost weight. Exercise and a balanced diet will help with this.

The quality of your hair may change or you may suffer from hair loss. It usually happens two or three months after you leave from intensive care. This should resolve with time.

You may also have scars. These will fade over time and may not seem noticeable after awhile. If your scars continue to worry you, please speak with your doctor.

Your voice may change and sound “husky” or weak. This is likely due to a breathing tube that you may have had. Again, the voice changes will usually resolve over time. If the problem continues on for some months, discuss it with your doctor.

## **Changes in Mood and Feelings**

Many patients experience changes in their mood or feel depressed. This is a common problem. It will improve with time.

Sometimes it may seem that any progress you make is very slow. You have to remember that recovery from a serious illness will leave you weak and your body has a lot of work to do to feel better.

Your loved ones have been through a very worrying time and may be overprotective. It may take a while for you and your family to come to terms with what has happened to you. It might help to talk to someone other than family or friends about your experiences. Please remember that your health professionals on the ward are there to help.

# *After Intensive Care*

*For Patients and Families*



# After Intensive Care

When you have been ill and in intensive care, it may take time for you to return to your normal self. Exactly how long it will take will depend on the length of time you have been ill, your state of health before your illness, your weight loss since coming to hospital, and whether or not your illness means that you will have to change some parts of your lifestyle.

## **Going to the Ward**

The thought of going to a new environment can be worrying. Rest assured, the staff on the ward are very experienced in caring for people who have been seriously ill. Once you are transferred to the ward, a new physician and health care team will be responsible for your care. They are best suited to meet your current needs in this phase of your illness.

On the ward, each nurse is responsible for several patients and will not be at your bedside all the time. This can be frightening at first, but a nurse will be nearby. If you need any help, there is a call bell for you to use and someone will be with you as quickly as possible.

If you have concerns, discuss them

with your doctor and nurses. To help the transition, the REACT team, which is a team of ICU nurses, physicians and respiratory therapists, will follow your progress for the first few days after you leave the Intensive Care Unit.

Most of the rooms in the hospital are semi-private, which means you may share your room with another person. A television is available to rent, as well as a telephone, for a daily fee. Please talk to your nurse. If you need to make long distance calls, more charges will apply. Visiting hours are from 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m., with two visitors in your room at a time.

## **Exercise**

Your ability to do small activities may be difficult and very tiring. During your intensive care stay you may have lost weight and muscle strength. Your joints may also be stiff since you have not been active for some time.

Take it slowly at first and gradually increase your activity. It may take months before you feel you are back to normal. You will most likely need frequent rests in the day, especially at the beginning. Physiotherapists and

occupational therapists are available to help with exercises to aid in your recovery. For encouragement, keep a diary. This will help you reflect on your progress and it will help motivate you on those days when you feel you are not improving.

## **Sleep**

When you were very ill, your sleep pattern was disrupted. There was little difference between night and day.

Returning to a normal sleep pattern may take a while. Being awake at night can be worrying. It is common for a small problem to seem overwhelming in the middle of the night, when you are the only person awake. If this happens, it may be helpful to read or listen to the radio, tape or CD. Relaxation tapes can be helpful for some people.

Some of our patients experience nightmares. They can be frightening, vivid and appear real, but they do subside over a few days or weeks. This is quite normal. They are most likely caused by a combination of the medications you received, altered hormone levels and your disrupted sleep pattern.