

Communicating with the ICU team

Communication with you is a very important part of our job here in the ICU. Different families prefer different amounts of information: some families like to know a lot of details, others don't. Here are some ways that we communicate with you:

Ask your nurse. This is often the first, and best, place to start. Nurses in the ICU take care of 1 or 2 patients at a time. They spend a lot of time with their patients and know all the details of what is going on.

Ask your doctors. There is a team of ICU physicians caring for your family member. We have at least two doctors here 24x7. The best time to speak with them is usually in the afternoon, between 2:00pm and 5:00pm.

Ask your social worker. Social workers have helped other families with issues like: coping with the challenges of a loved one being ill and hospitalized, resources such as local lodging or how to get extra help at home, concerns related to alcohol or substance abuse, etc. Ask your nurse to call your social worker.

Schedule a family meeting. A family meeting is a time for you to meet with the care team and review what's going on. It is protected time for communication about where we've been, where we're going, and what to expect.

11/11/10



Join us on Rounds. We are trying something new. Usually, rounds include just the doctors, nurses, and other health care providers. We are piloting a program to include families who want to participate as part of rounds. If you think you might be interested in attending, read the information below explaining what rounds are and let us know if they are of interest to you.

Rounds in the ICU

What are Rounds?

During "rounds" your family member's nurse, the ICU physicians, and sometimes the respiratory therapist, pharmacist, or other members of the team review and discuss all aspects of your loved one's care. Together, they build a plan for the day.

When do rounds take place?

8:30am – 1:00pm, seven days a week.

When will the team round on my family member?

The order of rounds varies daily based on patient needs, so we can't predict exactly what time rounds on your family member will take place. If you tell your nurse you want to attend, we will make every effort to make sure we find you before we start rounding on your family member.



Beth Israel Deaconess
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Join us on Rounds in the ICU

What happens on rounds?

Rounds start with the team reviewing information about your family member. We discuss lab results, medications, x-rays, etc. Because there is so much information for each patient, this part of rounds is very scripted and regimented, so that we can provide the best care for your family member. Then, we perform a physical exam: listen to the heart, lungs, and so on.

The second part of rounds is focused on determining a diagnosis and coming up with a plan. We talk about the information just presented and we ask and answer questions. We explore a lot of possibilities, and often make plans for the worst-case scenario. This is also where we spend time teaching junior doctors how to become world-class physicians.

Are rounds right for me?

You may want to come to rounds if you are interested in hearing very detailed information about your loved one's care: ventilator settings, lab results, x-rays, etc.

Rounds might not be right for you if listening to differing opinions regarding plans of care makes you uncomfortable. We talk about a lot of possibilities, and try to get everyone's thoughts. This is very common. Similarly, we teach on rounds, and hearing this happen can be uncomfortable for some people.

If you decide not to attend rounds, remember, there are many ways to communicate with us.

If you decide to join rounds and have several questions, we may ask you to schedule a family meeting for later in the day.

How do I join rounds?

1. Designate 1 or 2 people from your family to be the spokesperson.
2. Check the appropriate box on the response card and give it to your nurse so he or she knows that you are interested in participating in rounds the next morning.
3. Come to the ICU by 8:30am the day you wish to attend rounds. Let your nurse know when you arrive and he or she will give you a restaurant-style pager.
4. When it is time to round on your family member, you will be paged to return to the ICU.

If your family member is awake, we will first ask him or her if they would like you to join rounds.