

# ICU Diary



Atlantic  
Health System

# Why keep a diary for my loved one?

Patients who have had a stay in ICU often have little or no factual memory of their Intensive Care Unit (ICU) stay. Their memory for this time can be affected by the illness itself or the sedative drugs we give to our patients to keep them comfortable. Patients may have altered memories about what occurred in the ICU; yet for the patient that memory seems very real even though it did not actually take place. Sometimes patients may have nightmares or hallucinations from their time in the ICU that can be very frightening.

Research has suggested that patients can become stressed and anxious when they do not fully understand what has happened to them while they were in the ICU. To help patients understand more about their illness and ICU stay we encourage families to keep a diary of some general things that happened during their ICU stay. A diary has been shown to reduce stress in patients after they are transferred from the ICU in the months during their recovery. Often when a patient starts to ask questions about their stay in the ICU this is a good time to begin to review with them the diary and what actually happened to them while they were in the ICU.

# What should I write in the diary?

Patients may not recall what brought them to the hospital or the ICU so that is a good topic to start the diary with. The idea is to give your loved one a general idea of how they progressed while in the ICU. There is not a wrong or right way to make a diary entry. You know your loved one and know what would be helpful for them to read in a diary. Including personal messages and any news from their life outside of the hospital may decrease their sense of loss of time.

# Do I have to write in the diary every day?

No, there may be days in the ICU when the plan of care has not changed very much, and other days when a lot of activity is occurring. Remember to include updates from your loved ones home and personal life.

## **Here are some examples of diary entries:**

### **> Day 1**

*This diary is being written to help you understand what has been happening to you in Intensive Care. You came to the hospital emergency department at 5 am by ambulance. You had been vomiting since the day before and had tummy pain. You went right to surgery and came back to the intensive care unit since you still needed the breathing machine (ventilator). You had a hole in your intestine and needed to have that part of you intestine removed. They want to be sure you do not have a big infection from bacteria in your intestine now leaking out into your system, so you have lots of antibiotics. You have a big IV tube in your neck for all the medications and blood. You have an IV in your right wrist called an arterial line, so they could watch your blood pressure continuously and take blood for blood tests without having to stick you with a needle several times a day. You are connected to a heart monitor on the wall behind your bed and I can watch your heart rate and oxygen levels. You have a tube in your nose to suck out the fluid in your stomach so you do not get nauseous. You are sedated and only briefly open your eyes if someone calls your name and taps you on the shoulder. AT HOME: The Mets won their first two games so far. Johnny and Sue did the school play, and were a big hit.*

### **> Day 2**

*The nurse stopped your sedation medication to see if you would wake up and follow commands, and maybe come off the breathing machine. When the doctor asked you to give a thumbs up you were able to. They have been feeding you now through the tube that went to your stomach and it seems that your intestines are working and moving the food. They are sitting you way up in bed now, and you are much more awake. I have the Mets game on TV for you and you did watch it. Johnny came to visit and you gave him a thumbs up. You really want the breathing tube out of your throat and have tried to take it yourself. To prevent that, they put soft mitts that look like boxing gloves on your hands. The plan is to take more fluid out of your body before the breathing tube can come out, since you are really swollen and they do not want the fluid to go to your lungs.*

### **> Day 4**

*Today you came off of the breathing machine. When the nurse wanted to get you out of bed and have you sit in a chair for a while you told her that all you wanted to do was sleep, but you did sit in a chair today for 2 hours. They are going to see if you can swallow so that the tube in your nose to your stomach can come out. The surgeon thinks you will be able to leave the ICU today.*



> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---



> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

> Date \_\_\_\_\_ ICU Day \_\_\_\_\_

**General Condition:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Plan of Care for the Day:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Personal Messages and Updates from Home:**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---













# Resources:

**For more information about recovering from critical illness visit:**

**[icu-delirium.org](http://icu-delirium.org)**

**[helpguide.org](http://helpguide.org)**

**[myicuare.org](http://myicuare.org)**

**Morristown Medical Center**

100 Madison Avenue  
Morristown, NJ 07960

**Overlook Medical Center**

99 Beauvoir Avenue  
Summit, NJ 07901

**Newton Medical Center**

175 High Street  
Newton, NJ 07860

[atlanticealth.org](http://atlanticealth.org)

**Chilton Medical Center**

97 West Parkway  
Pompton Plains, NJ 07444

**Hackettstown Medical Center**

651 Willow Grove Street  
Hackettstown, NJ 07840

CORP-28407-18  
AH30001 (08/18)



Atlantic  
Health System

---