

# What to expect following surgery: inpatient information

Information for Patients & Families



## **“Following surgery, I will wake up in post-operative critical care (POCCU/ITU). What is it like?”**

Most patients come to POCCU following cardiac surgery. Our post-operative critical care unit (POCCU) consists of two units. There are 9 beds in POCCU 1 and 12 beds in POCCU 2. Each unit is an open bay with the beds situated around the edges of the room looking inwards to the nurses' station based in the middle. We also have an Intensive Care Unit (ITU) with 12 separate side rooms. Each bed has their own dedicated nurse who will start their shift at around 7am in the morning and handover to another nurse around 8pm in the evening.

The units are often busy with lots of nursing staff and doctors on shift. We also have a therapies team who visit patients throughout the day (such as physiotherapists, speech and language therapists, dietitians, psychologist, occupational therapist etc). You may see a range of the therapy team depending on your needs throughout your stay.

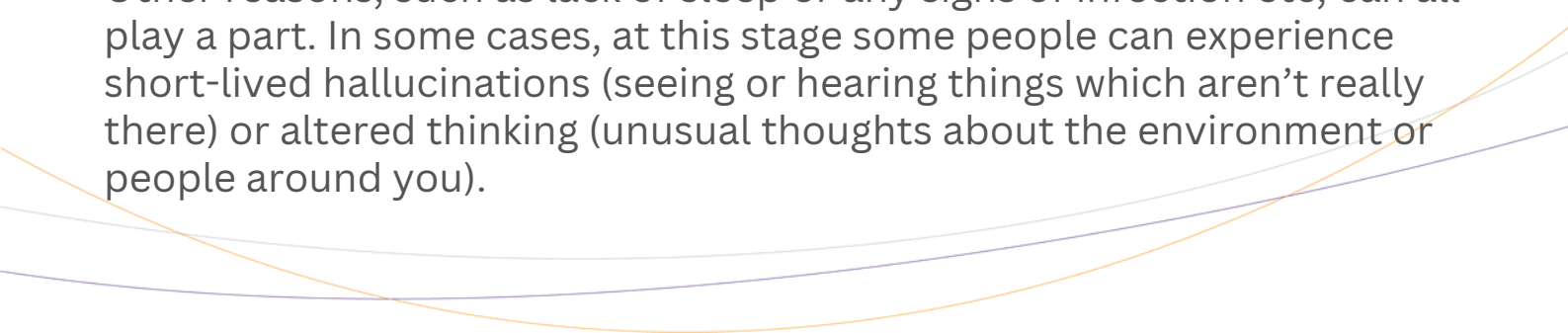
Your Cardiac/Thoracic Surgeon will be able to talk to you about the length of stay you are likely to need following your surgery and whether this is likely to be on POCCU or ITU.

If you would like to watch a video of our critical care unit and what to expect please visit our website and view the Critical Care patient journey video.

## **“Will I feel confused/disorientated when I wake up from surgery?”**

When you wake up following your surgery you would expect to feel some discomfort and pain (although staff will help you manage this with the right medications). Many patients can often feel quite confused on the first day or two after their surgery. Don't worry this is quite common in the early stages of your initial recovery and can be due to a number of factors, such as the effects of the anaesthetic and sedative medicines, alongside the pain medication you may be given.

Other reasons, such as lack of sleep or any signs of infection etc, can all play a part. In some cases, at this stage some people can experience short-lived hallucinations (seeing or hearing things which aren't really there) or altered thinking (unusual thoughts about the environment or people around you).



If this confusion does happen, please talk to the medical team looking after you who will help to reassure you. Our staff are trained to support you through this situation and will treat any issues which may be leading to postoperative confusion (which can also be known as “delirium” particularly where the confusion is more significant).

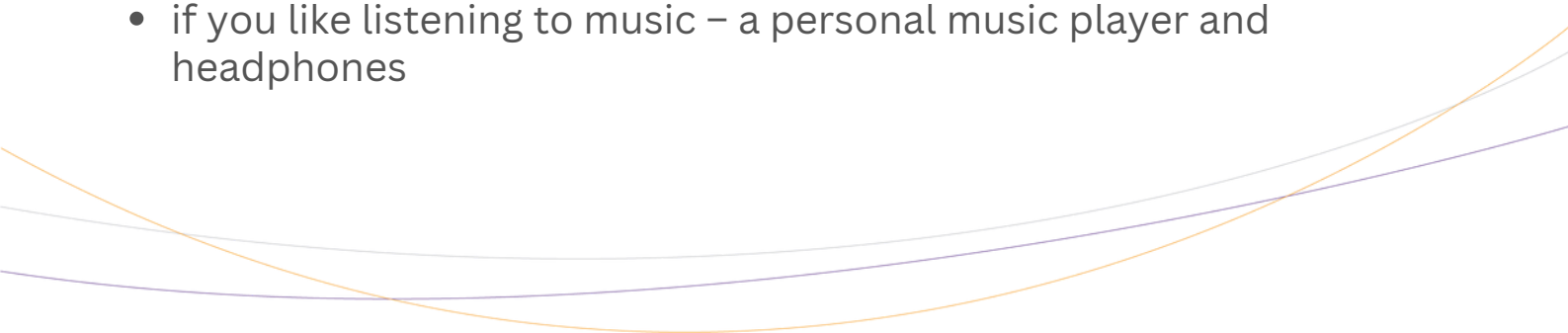
If you would like to know more about Delirium before having your surgery, you can access our patient information leaflet please visit our website.

### **“What can I do to help the hospital stay go well and help to reduce the likelihood of post-operative confusion?”**

There are a few simple things that you can do to enhance your well-being and reduce the likelihood of developing post-operative confusion following surgery. Such as:

- Arrange for your family and/or friends to visit during visiting hours to help you feel reassured and connected to loved ones.
- Making sure that you have any glasses and hearing aids from home so that you can see and hear things as you normally would at home.
- Bringing a familiar item from home such as a family photograph can also help you feel calmer and connected to the outside world outside of visiting hours.
- Making staff aware before surgery about any medications you may take for your mental health/emotional well-being.
- Letting us know if you may be affected by nicotine/alcohol withdrawal effects during your hospital stay so that we can ensure you have the right medications in place.

The day can feel very long when you are in hospital, so it would be worthwhile bringing some of the following items to pass the time and to help you communicate with loved ones:

- your mobile phone and charger
  - if you enjoy reading or puzzles bring a book/puzzle books and a pen with you
  - if you like listening to music – a personal music player and headphones
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- if you enjoy watching TV download some films to your iPad/kindle (don't forget to bring their chargers and some headphones)
- Bringing earplugs and an eye mask might help with sleep as hospitals can be busy and noisy places at times and this might help with preventing sleep problems (although we do have these available at the hospital too).

Most of our wards have access to activity pack trolleys; TV's and IPADs - please do ask the staff who are looking after you.

It is important to try to eat and drink as soon as you are advised to by the medical/therapy team, to build up energy levels and help aid your recovery.

Getting up and moving with the physiotherapy team when they visit is also a very important part of your recovery (we also know that this can help to keep post-operative confusion at bay).

If you feel anxious or worried at any time during your stay, speak to your nurse or a member of the team who will help to reassure you and answer any questions you may have.

We also have a clinical psychology and mental health liaison inpatient service at the hospital and, where appropriate, you can be referred for more in-depth support if needed.

If you have any concerns around additional needs (Learning disability/autism/dementia or other memory problems etc) or have experienced difficult previous hospital stays which may mean you are more worried than usual about your hospital stay, please inform the nurse in charge when you are admitted to the ward, and we will help to accommodate you

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