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Information for Relatives

Patients on Ventilation

Critical Care Unit



www.enherths-tr.nhs.uk

You can request this information in a different format or another language.

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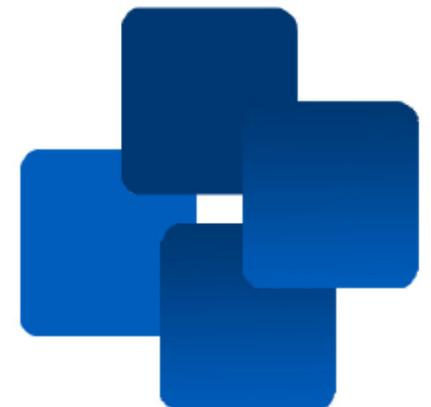
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Why do patients need a ventilator?

A ventilator is used for our patients who need help with their breathing. This is often because the patient's lungs need a rest or sometimes our patients require their breathing to be taken over for a while. This can be due to conditions such as pneumonia or because patients who have had major surgery need to rest until their body begins to recover from the stress of surgery.

The reason why your relative is 'on' a ventilator will be discussed with you by the doctor or nurse caring for your relative.

What is a ventilator?

A ventilator provides an oxygen/air mix to the lungs via an endotracheal tube (ET tube). The air that is provided by the ventilator expands the lungs; this is dependent on how much support the patient needs in order for their lungs to work adequately. A ventilator can provide full assistance with breathing or can assist the patient's independent breaths.

This is dependent on the patient's needs. The amount of oxygen can be adjusted to the patient's needs. You will be updated day to day by either a doctor or nurse to explain how the patient is recovering.



How does a ventilator work?

Once an ET tube is situated in the patient's mouth it can sometimes feel uncomfortable for the patient; therefore our patients often receive sedation to keep them comfortable and pain free. When the Critical Care team think the patient is ready to begin the process of reducing ventilatory assistance, we can turn the sedation off and wait for your relative to slowly wake up.

The ET tube will then be removed if we consider that our patient's breathing is stable enough to breathe without the support of the ventilator. Other factors related to our patient's general condition will also influence this.

How long does the patient stay on ventilation?

The length of time our patients may require to be on the ventilator will be dependant on the individual. Sometimes it is difficult to assess the length of time it will take for our patients to recover. However, we will update you day to day of how your relative is responding to the treatment we are giving.

Further Information

If you have any questions or require any further information, please ask one of the Critical Care team (doctors/nurses/ physiotherapists). We will be happy to explain anything!