

RECOVERY AFTER CRITICAL ILLNESS GUIDE

Why a Recovery Guide Matters

- Many survivors and families feel unprepared, isolated, or unsure what recovery might look like.
- Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS) is experienced by >50% of ICU survivors.
- PICS-Family is experienced by 30-70% of family members and includes stress, anxiety and/or burnout.

Teaching Reminders

- Use plain language (Guide is written at Grade 8 level).
- Speak slowly with warmth and empathy.
- Check in often—“How is this landing for you?”
- Use teach-back:
 - “In your own words, what stands out for you?”
 - “What changes do you expect in the coming weeks?”
 - “What symptoms should prompt urgent care?”

Patients & Families May Experience

- **Physical:** fatigue, weakness, challenges with ADLs, slower mobility.
- **Cognitive:** memory issues, difficulty concentrating, trouble planning or attending appointments.
- **Emotional:** anxiety, low mood, overwhelm, difficulty adjusting to a new normal.
- **Practical:** delays returning to work, financial strain, relationship stress.

Recovery is **not linear** - patients may have good and difficult days for weeks to months.

Flags to Highlight

- ▶ **Expected symptoms:** slow, steady improvement over weeks–months.
- ▶ **Concerning symptoms:** new or worsening physical, cognitive, emotional issues.
- ▶ **Immediate red flags:**
 - Suicidal ideation
 - Acute confusion
 - Respiratory distress
 - New neurological changes

Encourage accepting help, pacing activities, and involving caregivers early.

Family Caregivers of BC

-Free in BC-

Call Toll-free support line: 1-877-520-3267

1:1 coaching, peer support groups

Free webinars, tools, system navigation

--See page 19 in the Guide--



CRITICAL CARE BC
Provincial Health Services Authority

Critical Care BC works to improve the equitable delivery and experience of critical care services across BC to optimize health outcomes. By working on both clinical and performance improvement, we and our partners across the health system are moving towards achieving this goal.