



# What You Need To Know About Post-Intensive Care Syndrome (PICS)

What you can do to prevent and recognize the signs and symptoms of PICS

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## What is PICS?

Post-intensive care syndrome, also known as PICS, is a group of symptoms that may occur in people after discharge from an Intensive Care Unit (ICU). PICS can affect daily living, slow thinking, or cause difficulties with processing thoughts.

## What are the Symptoms of PICS?

Symptoms are divided into three main groups: thinking (cognitive) problems, emotional problems and physical problems. Problems in one area may cause new or worsening function in another area.

Cognitive problems may include:

- Reduced attention and ability to concentrate
- Memory loss
- Slower thought processing speed
- Difficulty making decisions

These problems can lead to difficult communication

Emotional problems may include:

- Anxiety - excessive worry, irritability, sleepiness
- Depression - tiredness, loss of interest, lack of hunger
- Post-traumatic stress disorder - flashbacks, severe anxiety, touchiness

Physical problems may include:

- Slower movements
- Multiple falls
- Muscle weakness in entire body

PICS symptoms may occur before or after discharge from the ICU. Talk to your doctor if the patient is not able to do normal daily activities.

## **What is PICS-Family?**

PICS-Family is a group of symptoms that may affect family members of people who have recently left the ICU. It is common for family members to feel any or some of the following symptoms:

- Stress
- Sleepiness
- Sadness
- Grief
- Post-traumatic stress disorder
- Anxiety

Family members can do a few things to help get through this difficult time. Talking often with the patient's doctor, trying to continue a normal daily routine, and playing a part in the patient's bedside care can all help to alleviate these symptoms.

## **How can family members help in the ICU?**

- Keep a diary of the patient's time in the ICU
- Use a calm voice to help the patient feel more comfortable and relaxed
- Encourage the patient to move around as much as possible
- Take part in the patient's bedside care by doing things like giving massages and talking about daily events

## **How can family members help outside the ICU?**

- Encourage the patient to move around as much as possible
- Gradually encourage the patient to get back in to a normal routine
- Encourage the patient to be independent. Assist only in risky situations
- Make sure there is communication between the hospital and outpatient staff members

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