



Supportive Care Unit (Ward 30)

What is supportive and palliative care?

If you have been told your health may not improve or you have a serious illness, you may be offered palliative care. The aim of palliative care is to maximise a person's quality of life by treating and relieving symptoms. This can include physical symptoms such as pain or breathlessness but we also acknowledge that illness can lead to psychological, practical and spiritual worries which we can help to address. Supportive and palliative care focuses on continuously meeting the needs of our patients and those close to them, to make sure what matters most to people is our priority too. We look after patients and their families who are waiting for a diagnosis, undergoing curative treatment as well as patients continuing to live with their illness.

What is the Supportive Care Unit (SCU)?

If the Supportive and Palliative Care Team and the ward team looking after you feel you have specific needs that would be best managed primarily by the Supportive and Palliative Care Team, we may discuss the Supportive Care Unit with you.

This is based on Ward 30 at Arrowe Park Hospital. Patients on the Supportive Care Unit will have their care co-ordinated by the Palliative Medicine team, with regular reviews from a Palliative Medicine Consultant and their team. Whilst the primary focus of treatment will be on improving your symptoms and quality of life, treatments such as blood transfusions and intravenous antibiotics can also be given if clinically indicated.

What is being on the Supportive Care Unit like?

Ward 30 is shared with haematology patients, many of whom are having chemotherapy treatment, and need individual rooms. As a result, all the patient beds are in their own room, with a small ensuite (for patient use only). All rooms open onto the main ward corridor and visible to the nursing team looking after you.

Ward 30 is a busy ward looking after patients with complex medical needs. As with any ward, each member of the nursing team will be looking after a number of patients. Our nurses are highly skilled and passionate in caring for supportive and palliative care patients and prioritise medications to help with symptom control, but tasks are carried out in order of clinical priority so please do bear with us if there is a slight delay in getting these to you.

What happens while I am waiting for a bed on the Supportive Care Unit?

There are only a small number of beds available on the Supportive Care Unit, so you may be added to the waiting list. This is reviewed on a daily basis by the Supportive and Palliative Care Team, who prioritise the patients on the list based on their clinical need.

Whilst you are waiting a bed on the Supportive Care Unit, you will continue to be seen by the team of doctors looking after you on the ward you are currently on. The Supportive and Palliative Care Team will continue to review you regularly to help your symptoms. If your symptoms improve while you are waiting for a Supportive Care Unit bed, it may be that you no longer need to move to the Supportive Care Unit, but this would be discussed with you if this were to happen. When a bed is available, you may need to have an up to date negative COVID swab before moving wards.

How often will I be reviewed when I am on the Supportive Care Unit?

The Palliative Medicine Consultants and their team are on the ward for their ward rounds every morning Monday to Friday. These ward round reviews will focus on your medical issues and symptoms, and a plan will be put together. Your views on your care and your priorities are very important to us, and the plan will be made by the doctors, together with you and you loved ones.

At a weekend, there are no routine medical reviews. If you need a doctor, the ward team can contact the oncall medical team who can see you. The Supportive and Palliative Care Clinical Nurse Specialists are available to support with urgent symptom control at a weekend and bank holidays 9am-5pm. If advice from the Palliative Medicine Consultants is required out of normal working hours, the team seeing you can contact them for advice.

How often can I have visitors?

The unit operates a system of open visiting in the day time, but asks that you arrange visits amongst yourselves with only a few visitors at a time so the to avoid becoming overtired. Your loved ones are very welcome to be present during the medical ward rounds that will happen every morning Monday-Friday. There is also a small relatives' room available for shared use on the ward.

If family wish to be staying overnight, please speak to the nurse in charge prior to making any arrangements. Similarly, if you have a young child you want to visit you, please confirm with the nurse in charge first.

Please do not come to visit your loved one if you are unwell, as there are patients on the ward receiving chemotherapy and a simple cold or similar can make them very unwell. If you are unsure, please speak to the ward team first.

Will I remain on the Supportive Care Unit?

There may be some medical or surgical options that are not available on ward 30, and you may need to be moved to another unit within the hospital. This would be discussed with you in

advance, and any decision on treatment being a joint decision with the doctors, yourself and your loved ones. The Supportive Care Unit can give all intravenous medications e.g. strong antibiotics or blood transfusions you may need.

If your symptoms were to improve and you no longer need to be in hospital, the team looking after you may discuss being discharged to another care setting, such as home or a nursing home. We recognise these decisions are emotive and can be complex to ensure you have the right level of support, so may be discussed in advance to understand your needs and get plans in place for discharge whilst fine-tuning your treatment. If you were not well enough at the point of a planned discharge, we would not discharge you. If you were ready for home but needed to wait for carers to be in place, we would not move you to another ward while you were waiting.

Useful contacts

Wirral University Teaching Hospitals Supportive and Palliative Care Team

Direct dial number 0151 552 1892, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm only. Please leave an answer phone message for any non-urgent queries. Outside of these hours, your ward team can contact our team for emergency advice.

Wirral University Teaching Hospitals Supportive Care Unit

Main switchboard 0151 678 5111 – to get through to the Supportive Care Unit, please ask for Ward 30

Wirral Hospice St John's

Main switchboard 0151 334 2778 or online at www.wirralhospice.org

Wirral Palliative Care Services and Advice Line

Specialist advice can be accessed 24/7 in Wirral through this number, which is particularly helpful if you are back at home. Call 0151 343 9529 and select option 1.

MacMillan Cancer Support

0808 808 00 00 (7 days a week, 8am-8pm) or online at www.macmillan.org.uk

Source of information for symptom control issues as well as practical support such as benefits and Advance Care Planning