What to Expect When You Visit Your Sibling in the Intensive Care Unit
A note for parents and caregivers:

This book is for children of all ages. It explains a common experience when visiting a child in Seattle Children’s Intensive Care Unit (ICU).

Because every family’s ICU experience is different, some parts of this book may not apply to your child. Some children can cope with a lot of information. Others may become anxious with too much information. You know your child best: choose which sections to share.

What you can do

We encourage you to be as much a part of your child’s hospital experience as possible. Siblings are welcome to visit as often as they would like during hospital visiting hours. If your child is in isolation or their sibling is ill, please talk with your nurse before visiting. Caregivers are welcomed and encouraged to be at the bedside 24 hours each day.

For questions or support for your child, or to schedule a consult with a Child Life specialist (includes medical play, coping strategies and/or a tour), please contact:
Seattle Children’s ICU Child Life Specialists
206-987-0450
Many kids come to the hospital and need to stay in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU). Some kids’ stays are planned. Other kids must come to the hospital suddenly.

You can visit your brother or sister in the ICU. Your visit is very important to them. This book will help answer questions that you may have about their stay.

Do you know why your brother or sister is in the ICU?
Here are a few areas you might see when you arrive at the hospital.

You will need to stay with your parent or another adult when you visit. Adults and kids 12 and older will get a badge to wear while they visit the hospital.
Before you see your brother or sister, you will first meet the unit coordinator. The unit coordinator is someone who welcomes families to the ICU and helps answer their questions.

The ICU can be a busy place. The unit coordinator will let you know when you can visit your brother or sister.
Once you are in the ICU, there are a few places where you and your family can spend time.

This is the family lounge. It is a room where you and your family can go to hang out and talk. In the family lounge you can get something to eat, watch TV, play Xbox or use the computers.

This room is called the Quiet Room. It’s a great place to go to think or to talk quietly with your family. It’s also a place where your parents can talk with the doctors.
Your brother or sister will have many people taking care of them while in the hospital. Their care team may include doctors, nurses and other specialists.

Here is a place in the ICU where you may see people working.

What do you think these people do?
Take a closer look at your brother or sister’s room. Here is what you might find.

If your brother or sister is older their bed may look like this. This bed has buttons to help it go up and down.

If your brother or sister is younger their bed may look like this.
If your brother or sister is really little their bed may look like this.

The couch in the room can be a place where your parent or caregiver can sleep when they are at the hospital.

Which kind of bed do you think your brother or sister is in?
These are some of the machines you might see in the room.

The monitor shows your brother or sister’s heart rate. Your heart rate is how fast your heart is beating. The monitor can also tell how well your brother or sister is breathing.

A pulse oximeter [ahk-SIM-uh-ter], or pulse ox, looks like a Band-Aid with a little red light. It wraps around your brother or sister’s finger or toe to measure how much oxygen is in their blood.
You might hear these machines beep. The beeps remind the nurse to check the machine.

This pole holds small machines that give medicine and liquids to your brother or sister. The medicine goes to your brother or sister’s body through a small tube called an IV or PICC line.

The boom is attached to the ceiling. The nurse can move it around and plug things into it like a CD player or medical equipment.
When you see your brother or sister, they might look a little different but they are the same person. Before you visit, you will first need to wash your hands. You may be able to touch your brother or sister, talk to them or hold their hand. They like to know you are with them.

Some kids like to bring something for their brother or sister when they visit. This could be a picture that you made, a stuffed animal, or even a favorite book or toy from home.

What will you say to your brother or sister? What will you bring them?
After visiting your brother or sister, you might get to visit the hospital’s playroom. You can find lots of fun things in the Playroom or Teen Zone, including:

- Games
- Toys
- Crafts
- Puzzles
- Music
- Art activities

In the playroom you can make something for your brother or sister’s room. What do you want to do in the playroom?
Some kids like to talk about how they are feeling during their visit. You can point to the faces to tell your parent or caregiver about your feelings.

Very happy  Happy  OK  Nervous  Sad or scared  Very sad or scared

Draw a picture of how you feel today
We hope this has helped you understand what to expect when you visit your brother or sister in the ICU.

Do you have any questions? Please ask!
My name is: _____________________________.
I am _______ years old.

Some special things to know about me:
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

When I visit my brother or sister I would like to:
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

When I am sad or scared, this helps me feel better:
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

Something that will help me during my visit:
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your child's nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.