



# **Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU)**

# What is PACU?

- Unit where patients wake up after receiving anesthesia
- Vital signs closely monitored
- Pain management initiated
- Fluids initiated
- Specialty area with trained staff



UPMC Shadyside PACU

# Patient Information

## On Admission in PACU

- Monitoring equipment attached
  - Cardiac monitor
  - Blood pressure cuff
  - Pulse oximetry
- Oxygen may be applied
- Surgical site examined
- Intravenous fluids checked
- Report obtained from the anesthesia provider
- Vital signs taken every 5-15 minutes



# Patient Information

## Comfort Measures:

- Patient may feel the following up to 24 hours
  - Sore throat
  - Aching muscles
  - General malaise
- Shivering – not uncommon
  - Warm cotton blankets applied as necessary
  - Warm air blanket may be utilized
  - Medication is used for extreme shivering



# Patient Information

- Comfort Measures:
- Nausea and Vomiting – may occur
  - If history of having, inform anesthesia prior to surgery
  - PACU nurse will treat with medication post operatively
- Pain – is a common occurrence and should be anticipated
  - Important for you to describe to the nurse
  - A scale of 1 – 10 is utilized to rank your pain
  - The PACU nurse will treat your pain until comfort is obtained
  - It is unrealistic to expect to be pain free, goal in PACU is pain control



# Patient Information

## Technology for our Patients

- Equipment available while in PACU
  - Radios
  - Laptop
  - iPads
- Purpose of equipment
  - Music, watch movies or television shows, surf web, access email, play video games or video conference to Surgical Waiting Room
- Please ask if you would like to utilize this equipment while you are in the PACU



# Patient Information

## PACU Length of Stay

- Will vary, is dependent upon several factors
  - Type of surgery, patient's response to surgery and anesthesia, medical history
  - Average length of stay is 1 - 3 hours
  - Longer stays may be necessary to meet discharge criteria



# Patient Information

## PACU Length of Stay

- Discharge criteria
  - Reaction from anesthesia
    - General – awake
    - Spinal – moving and able to feel legs
  - Vital signs stable
    - Medicine may be needed for heart rate, blood pressure, respirations, or other disorders (e.g. diabetes)
  - Pain controlled
  - Nausea and vomiting controlled if present
  - Body temperature is normal
- Discharged by anesthesiologist when criteria met





# Patient Information

## Inpatient Admissions:

- Rooms are assigned as they become available
- Rooms assignment timeliness determined by
  - Discharges
  - Multiple factors – ICU, specialty floors, monitored beds, isolation, male vs. female beds, etc.)
- Private rooms- are not guaranteed
- A room may not always be available when the patient is reacted. The PACU nurse will keep the patient and family updated.



# Family and Visitor Information

## Surgical Family Lounge

- Located on 1 Posner, staffed 4:30 a.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- Available 24 hours for family and friends of surgical patients
- A family member should wait in lounge until the surgeon has spoken with them
- Identify one person to speak with Surgeon, OR, or PACU
- Please give the greeters a contact number such as a cell phone where you may be reached
- Advise greeter as you enter or leave lounge



# Family and Visitor Information

## During Surgery

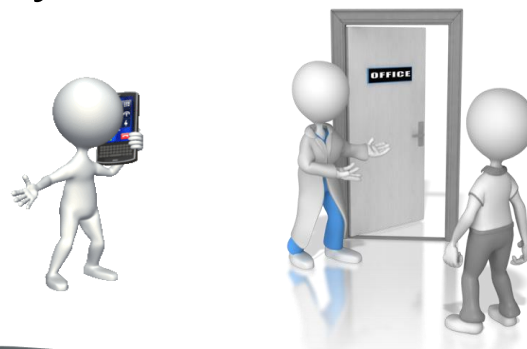
- An estimation of surgery length may be given by surgeon
  - Please remember surgery may take longer than expected
- Surgery may be delayed due to emergencies, or previous surgeries extended longer causing delays
- The OR staff may call to update families
- A communication (tracking) board is in the Surgical Lounge
  - Allows family to know where patient is in the surgical process
- Please ask the greeters at the desk if you are concerned with a delay or need information



# Family and Visitor Information

## Physician Communication

- Individualized to each physician
  - When surgery is over the physician may notify the family by:
    - Phone call to waiting room
    - Visit to waiting room
    - Visit in 2<sup>nd</sup> floor consult room
    - Phone call after completing several surgeries
- Families should stay in Surgical Lounge until they speak to the physician
- Please give a number where you can be reached when leaving the surgical lounge.



# Family and Visitor Information

## PACU Visitation

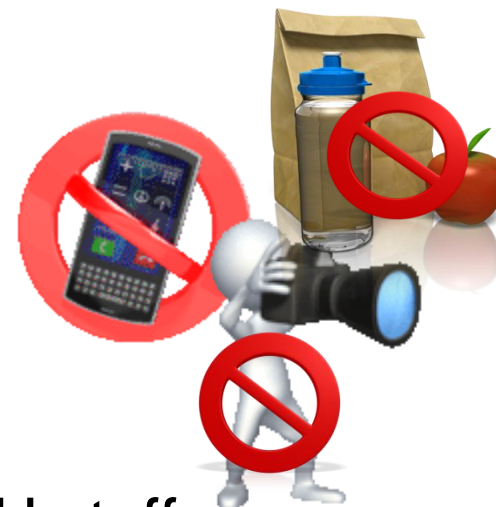
- Limited due to:
  - Safety and confidentiality of PACU patients
  - Risk of infection
  - Interruption to work flow
- PACU nurse will call family when the patient is settled
- When patient is ready, one visitor for 5 minutes is permitted
- Additional visitors may see and speak to patient through video conference
- Visits timed for appropriateness
- You may be asked to leave PACU



# Family and Visitor Information

Before visiting PACU, be sure you:

- Do not bring food, drinks, cell phones or cameras in PACU
- Are over 14 years of age
- Are the only visitor
- Limit visit to 5 minutes
- Feel comfortable in a medical setting
- Can remain calm
- Are willing to follow directions from PACU staff
- Use hand sanitizers as you enter and leave PACU



# Family and Visitor Information

## What to expect when visiting PACU

- Large room with many patients
- Noise
  - Monitor alarms, other patients, equipment, staff and patient conversations
- IVs, oxygen, monitors, medical equipment
- Your family member may have tubes and drains
- Activity
  - Patients may require x-rays, blood work, personnel and patients coming and going.
- Patients may appear pale, puffy or swollen.

# Family and Visitor Information

Patients in PACU may have:

- A breathing tube in surgery, this may cause a sore throat
- Shivering- warm blankets will be applied
- Pain medication that causes itchiness
- Sleepiness from pain medication
- After anesthesia medications to help heart rate, blood pressure, respirations, or other disorders (e.g.. Diabetes) may be needed



# Family and Visitor Information

## Remember:

- Rest is important for recovery
- Resting from pain medicine is encouraged and normal
- Allow patients to rest after pain medication

## If you are unable to visit:

- The PACU nurse is trained to provide the best possible care throughout the anesthesia recovery process. They will update you on your loved one's progress.

# Family and Visitor Information

## Telephone calls into PACU

- Phone calls are not accepted into PACU
  - Volume of patients is high
  - Nurse must be vigilant in monitoring fresh post op patients
- PACU nurses will contact the Surgical Family Lounge
  - Within 90 minutes after PACU arrival
  - A point person should be chosen to speak to PACU nurse
- If not present at Hospital the nurse will call established contact



# Family and Visitor Information

While you wait:

- We have listed places in our hospital to help you
- See the greeters for additional services in the Shadyside neighborhood
- For any questions or concerns, please let the greeters know

Places to visit in the Hospital:

## **Cafeteria**

Posner Tower, first floor near Gift Shop

6:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. and 2 a.m. to 4 a.m.

## **Chapel**

Posner Tower, first floor

Across from Surgical Waiting Area

Open 24 hours a day

## **Gift Shop**

Posner Tower, First floor, near cafeteria

8:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m. weekdays

10 a.m. to 4 p.m. weekends

## **Hopwood Library**

(for patients and families)

West Wing concourse, first floor

8 a.m. to 8 p.m. weekdays

Noon to 6 p.m. Sundays, Closed Saturdays

Phone: 412-623-2620

## **Japanese Garden**

Posner Tower, outside hospitals main entrance

Open 24 hours a day

The PACU staff would like you to know we will do the best to meet your needs while your loved one is in our care. Thank you for taking the time to view this learning activity.

The PACU Staff

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CHANGING  
MEDICINE

# Patient and Family Information

This Power Point has been developed to give our patients and their families an overview of the Post Anesthesia Care Unit.

We hope you find it beneficial.

If you would like additional information on the Post Anesthesia Care Unit, please view our [online brochure](#).