

PATIENT HANDBOOK AND JOURNAL

POST SURGERY

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POST ANESTHESIA CARE UNIT (PACU)



After surgery you will be moved from the Operating Room directly to a special recovery room, called the Post Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU).

- » The PACU staff will continue to monitor you as you gradually wake up. You will remain in this area until your vital signs are stable. Usually about 2 hours.
- » When you wake up you will have a blood pressure cuff on your arm, oxygen tube in your nose, and a pulse oximeter (used to detect your oxygen level) on your finger.
- » If needed you will receive pain medication and/or medicine for nausea.
- » If you have had a hip replacement an x-ray will be taken of your new joint.
- » Your surgeon will speak with your family/friends in the surgical waiting area after the surgery is complete.
- » Your family and friends will be notified, usually by the receptionist in the waiting area, when you have been transferred to your hospital room. Remind your friends/family that you will need to rest on the day of surgery.

Journal entries and questions about the PACU stay:

AFTER SURGERY



MANAGING YOUR DISCOMFORT

Managing your pain is important to your recovery. Our goal is to manage your pain so that you are able to rest comfortably, move easier when it is time to get in and out of bed, and to participate in physical therapy. To keep you as comfortable as possible our healthcare team will work closely with you. In order for your pain to be treated effectively, it is important for you to:

- » Be sure to tell the nurse completing your medical history about what medications have or have not worked for you in the past.
- » Remember it is ok to have some pain. We want to work with you to determine what level of pain is acceptable for you.
- » Asking your nurse for pain medication on a timely basis is important for your comfort. Ask for medication when you begin to feel discomfort. You will be asked on a scale from 1-10 to rate your pain. If you wait until you are at an 8 rating, it is difficult to relieve your pain quickly. Asking for medication at a 4-5 rating will bring you comfort sooner. Our goal is to keep you comfortable!
- » As you work with your doctor and nurses let them know if the pain relief measures are adequate.
- » If you are nauseated, tell your nurse. This is a common side-effect that can be treated with medication.

For additional pain relief, cold therapy is often applied. An ice pack, cold therapy units are examples of what may be used. These will help to reduce swelling and relieve pain. Once the bulky dressing is removed from the operative site, ice may be applied for 20-30 minutes at a time to relieve pain.

You can make your own Ice Pack by following these directions:

1 part rubbing alcohol (70% isopropyl alcohol)

3 parts tap water

Mix together in a zipper lock baggie, then double bag it.

To make it more slushy, add alcohol. To make it more firm add water.

Be sure to put a towel next to your skin. Never apply the ice pack directly to the skin

With pain controlled and you are fairly comfortable you will be better able to participate in your own recovery.

Journal entries and questions regarding Managing your discomfort after surgery:

GOING HOME AFTER SURGERY



INSTRUCTIONS FOR GETTING DRESSED:

Your Occupational Therapist will go over dressing techniques with you. The approaches that you will be taught are designed to follow the spinal fusion precautions, which help to protect your back during the healing process. You can follow these same instructions when you are at home. If you have a soft foam flexiform brace you may put your T-shirt on while sitting on the edge of the bed. Fasten bras in the front and then turn them around to the back.

While sitting in a chair with good back support put on your pants, socks and shoes. Then you can stand up to pull up your pants. You will receive special instructions if you are unable to sit. Your Occupational Therapist will help to determine what equipment you will need. You will use the equipment at home until your doctor discontinues your spine precautions (generally not covered by insurance carriers).

TOOLS AVAILABLE TO HELP YOU WITH DRESSING (OPTIONAL):

- » A reacher can be used to assist you with completing your activities of daily living while following your post operative precautions. For example, it can be used to pull your pants over your feet and pull them to your knees. You can then stand up to pull them over your hips. It is helpful if you wear pants that are not tight fitting with perhaps an elastic waist band, that is loose around your waist. Remember they have to fit over your brace.
- » Use your sock-aide to put on your socks. It is important to pull equally on both straps at the same time. Socks that are loose fitting or stretchy will go on much easier than tight tube socks.
- » Use your long-handled shoehorn to put on shoes. Slip-on shoes, canvas tennis shoes, or loafers are easier to get on and take off. If you will be wearing tennis shoes, you may need to have someone tie your laces for you or you could purchase elastic shoelaces.

Journal entries and questions about TED Hose or getting dressed:

GETTING INTO A VEHICLE



- » You may sit in the front passenger seat when riding in the car; recline the seat for comfort.
- » Use pillows behind your back for comfort.
- » To sit down, have your back to the seat.
- » Use the back of the seat and the door for support as you slowly lower yourself to the seat.
- » Bring legs into the vehicle one at a time as you rotate your head and shoulder toward the front.
- » Move your shoulders and hips as a unit.
- » If you have a high vehicle, use a small step stool or have the vehicle pulled up to the curb to increase stability of getting in and out.
- » Riding in the car should be limited to essential travel over short distances and may be more comfortable with the seat slightly reclined.
- » On long trips, you should get out of the vehicle and stretch at least every hour to relieve the stress of prolonged sitting.
- » Check with your physician regarding when you may drive.