

## Post-Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU) Common Questions

### **Q: What happens after my child's surgery (or procedure)?**

Once your child's surgery is finished the surgeon will come to the surgical waiting area to talk to you. Please make sure that you stay in the area so that you're there when the surgeon comes.

Your child will be taken to the **Post-Anesthetic Care Unit (PACU)** to wake up from surgery. Parents are sometimes asked to come into the PACU to be with their child once he or she is awake. It doesn't mean something is wrong, it may be that your child just needs your comfort and reassurance.

It can take up to an hour before your child is awake and the PACU nurses are ready for you. The staff will let you know when it's safe for you to visit your child in PACU. A staff member will come to the surgical waiting area and bring you to your child's bedside. If you're not in the waiting room, you'll be paged back to the Short Stay Surgical Unit (SSSU).

### **Q: Why wasn't I asked to be with my child?**

It's not possible to have every parent in the PACU. If you don't go into the PACU, the team will make sure you and your child are together as soon as possible. Being asked to come in depends on:

- the needs of your child
- how long your child will be in PACU
- how busy the PACU is

The PACU nurse will answer any questions that you might have.

### **Q: What will be happening in the PACU?**

You may be surprised or concerned when you see your child for the first time after surgery. Your child:

- may be upset or not making sense
- may have an IV (intravenous)
- will be connected to a monitor
- may feel sick to his or her stomach

- may be getting oxygen by a mask
- may look puffy or swollen
- may be shivering (usually a side effect of the medicine given during surgery)

While in PACU, your child's nurse will:

- monitor your child's vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen level, breathing and temperature)
- help manage your child's pain with medicine or moving into a more comfortable position
- give your child a popsicle or a drink
- watch the area where your child had the surgery
- suction your child's nose and mouth if needed

The PACU is a large open area. Please respect the privacy of others, as you'll be able to see and maybe hear what's going on with other children. Please focus on comforting and reassuring your child.

The PACU can be a noisy place. You may hear beeps and other noises from machines used to monitor the children.

**Q: Will my child wake up just like he or she usually does?**

Children wake up in their own way. Some are wide awake in the PACU, others are sleepy, and some are confused and agitated

*Why is my child upset?*

- It is not uncommon for children to wake up from surgery crying and upset. This is often a side effect of the medicine used during the surgery. During this time, your child could be harder to settle. As the medicine wears off, your child will be more like his or her normal self.
- Your child may wake up crying because he or she is having some pain. Your child's nurse will give your child pain medicine. If you feel your child is having pain let your child's nurse know; you are a partner in your child's care.
- Sometimes children are upset because they're waking up in a different, unfamiliar environment.

*Why is it taking so long for my child to wake up?*

How fast your child wakes up depends on:

- the medicine your child was given before and during surgery
- how long the surgery was
- the type of surgery

Sometimes children are sleepier if they were tired before the surgery, or if it was nap time either when the surgery started or ended.

**Q: When can my child leave the PACU?**

Your child will go to the unit once your child's nurse determines your child is ready to leave PACU.

**Q: Where will my child go from the PACU?**

It depends on if your child:

- is going home
- has to stay overnight
- has to be admitted for a longer stay

If your child's going home, he or she will go to The Short Stay Surgical Unit (SSSU). The nurse in the SSSU will give you instructions on how to care for your child at home.

If your child won't be going home the same day, he or she may go back to the SSSU or go to one of the other inpatient units (Unit 1, 2, 3 or 4).

Sometimes your child is ready to leave PACU but a bed isn't ready yet. In this case, your child will stay in PACU until the bed is ready. You may notice that the nurse isn't at your child's bedside as much; however, your child's nurse will still check on you and your child often. If you need anything, please let someone know.