



Post Operative Care

Many patients wonder what happens immediately after surgery, when the procedure is over. What happens in the recovery room?

The Recovery Room

Post-operative recovery starts in the Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU). This unit is dedicated to meet the patient's needs thereby minimizing post-operative complications.

Anesthesia and Waking Up

Although it may have only taken moments to yield to the general anesthesia, recovery from anesthesia takes time. Throughout the surgery the anesthesiologist maintained deep sleep. During this time muscles and fat absorbed some of the anesthesia, which helped maintain levels of anesthesia in the brain and blood.

It takes time for anesthesia to be eliminated from the body's tissues. Many factors affect the amount of time patients need to spend in PACU. These factors include the pre-operative medication, the type of anesthetic and the length of time anesthetic was administered during surgery.

Hearing is the first sense to return following general anesthesia. This why the PACU staff speaks reassuringly to you while letting you know what they are doing. Their voices are what you are first aware of.

Assessing Patient Needs and Vital Signs

In the PACU the patient may wear certain devices to automatically monitor their vital signs. These devices include a blood pressure cuff, oximeter (records pulse) and EKG LEADS (monitors the heart). The IV remains in place to deliver medication and fluids intravenously. A urinary catheter (Foley Catheter) collects urine to keep the bladder empty until you are moved to your room in the Ambulatory Transition Unit, at which time it will be removed.

Thirst and Nourishment

Some patients experience nausea or vomiting after surgery. Therefore patients may only be allowed ice chips, sips of water or clear liquids. The anesthesiologist will administer a medication to prevent nausea prior to you leaving the operating room.