

What Happens in the Pediatric Post-Anesthesia Care Unit (PACU)

What is PACU?



University of
Vermont Health

Golisano
Children's Hospital

- PACU is the area where your child will wake up after anesthesia.
- It is sometimes referred to as the "recovery room."

Will I see the doctor?

- The doctor will speak with caregivers after the procedure in the waiting room consult rooms. Even after surgery is finished, the **anesthesia team continues to care for your child** and prepare them for recovery.
- This may cause a delay before you are brought back, thank you for your patience.

Will I be there when my child wakes up?

- Our **number one priority is your child's safety.**
- Our goal is to have you at the bedside before your child wakes up.
- The PACU team works hard to make this possible.
- We can allow **1–2 adult caregivers at a time**, depending on space and safety needs. Visiting children under 12 years olds are not permitted in PACU. Please make other arrangements.

Will my child be fussy when waking up?

- Please allow your child to **sleep until the anesthesia wears off naturally.**
- Waking too early may lead to a **fussy or restless period.**
- Some children experience "**emergence delirium,**" which means:
 - Your child may appear awake but is still not fully alert.
 - They may be confused, upset, or difficult to comfort.
 - This is temporary and usually only time will help. The **PACU nurses will ensure your child's safety.**

How long will my child be in PACU?

- Recovery time varies depending on the procedure and your child. Plan for **at least 1 hour** in PACU.
- Children may sleep for up to an hour before we begin gently waking them.
- Some children may sleep longer, especially if it overlaps with their usual nap time.

What happens after my child wakes up from an outpatient procedure?

- Your child may be offered a **drink or popsicle** (unless otherwise directed) after which their **IV may be removed** and you can help **get your child dressed.**
- Medications and physician instructions will be reviewed.
- For safety, your child will leave in a **wheelchair, wagon, or stroller,**

What happens after my child wakes up from an inpatient procedure?

- Your child may be offered a **drink or popsicle** (unless otherwise directed). The **IV will remain in place.**
- You and your child will wait in PACU while the inpatient unit (Baird 5) is preparing the room. When the room is ready, your child will be brought to Baird 5 on their stretcher.