

Post-PICU

Anticipatory Guidance for Caregivers



DOERNBECHER
CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

PEDIATRIC CRITICAL CARE +
NEUROTRAUMA RECOVERY PROGRAM



ABOUT THIS BOOKLET

Coming home from the hospital and caring for an injured or ill child is a very stressful experience for the entire family. Fortunately, most families feel that things get easier after the first few days to weeks, but there may be a few bumps along the way.

This packet provides information about what to look out for and useful tips for navigating life after coming home from the hospital.

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TIPS FOR USING THIS BOOKLET

Don't feel like you have to read it all at once.

Read what is important to you now and save the rest.

Use this packet as a reference to look at when you have questions about your child's recovery.

GENERAL TIPS

for After the PICU

The warmth and love wrapped up in the bond between you and your child has huge potential to bring your child through this hard time!

As much as you can, try to keep up normal routines.

If cleared by your doctor for activities, then it is best to jump back into normal routines like after school or weekend events, chores, dog walking, Sunday dinners, whatever was typical before going to the hospital. You may need to provide a little extra help at the beginning.

Set normal behavior expectations for all children including the child that was injured or sick.

Keep the same expectations for sharing, homework, chores, screen time, and general behavior in public or around family as you had before the hospital.

Encourage fun activities and visits from friends for all family members.

Support people, friends, and fun will help everyone cope during the recovery process and transition back to a more normal routine.

Encourage your children to talk about their feelings if they want to.

This includes the child who was in the hospital, their siblings, and other meaningful people in their life.

Attend all scheduled follow up appointments for your child.

Ask your child's healthcare provider(s) if you have any questions or concerns.

Take care of yourself!

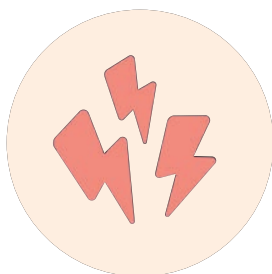
PHYSICAL CHANGES YOU MAY NOTICE

in Your Child after a Stay in the PICU

Some children act a little differently after they return home from the PICU. Usually, these changes lessen and go away with time. But if they do not get better, contact your child's healthcare provider(s), school counselor, or family doctor.

Physical Changes

Some children experience physical changes when coming home from the hospital. These changes are sometimes directly related to injuries and illnesses, but other times related to limited activity and movement while in the hospital. Physical changes can include:



PAIN



HEADACHE



WEIGHT
LOSS



BALANCE
PROBLEMS



LOSS OF MUSCLE
MASS/STRENGTH



SENSORY
CHANGES



FATIGUE / INCREASED
DAYTIME SLEEPINESS

EMOTIONAL CHANGES YOU MAY NOTICE

in Your Child after a Stay in the PICU

Emotional Changes

It is normal for children to experience temporary emotional changes, sometimes called *traumatic stress reactions*, after a life-threatening illness, injury, or painful medical procedure. Most children pass through this stage within a few weeks or less with some support. A smaller number of children have emotional difficulties that last longer and make other areas of life feel harder. Emotional reactions include:



**APPEARING MORE
SAD OR WORRIED**



**HAVING
NIGHTMARES**



**BEING
SHORT-TEMPERED**



**FEELING
JEALOUS**



**LACKING INTEREST
IN USUALLY
ENJOYABLE
ACTIVITIES**



**APPEARING
EMOTIONALLY
NUMB OR FLAT**



**BEING MORE
CAUTIOUS ABOUT
POTENTIAL DANGERS**



**FEELING GUILTY
ABOUT BEING SICK OR
THINKING THEY DID
SOMETHING WRONG
TO CAUSE IT**

BEHAVIORAL AND COGNITIVE CHANGES YOU MAY NOTICE

in Your Child after a Stay in the PICU

Behavioral Changes

It is very common for children to feel stressed, scared, sad and helpless in the hospital, and this may affect them after going home. Some changes you may observe in your child include:



**BEING CLINGIER TO
CAREGIVERS**



**SEEKING MORE
ATTENTION**



**HAVING TOILETING
ACCIDENTS**



**BEING MORE
EASILY IRRITATED**



**CHANGING
SLEEPING HABITS**



**BECOMING A
PICKIER EATER**



**REVERTING TO
"BABY-TALK"**



**WANTING TO BE ALONE
MORE THAN USUAL**

Cognitive Changes

In some cases, children experience cognitive, or thinking, changes after hospitalization. Usually, these changes return to normal in a couple of days to weeks. For children in academic settings, schools can help support children in their recovery by giving breaks and extra time to finish tasks. Most often, these are temporary and include:



**DECLINES IN
CONCENTRATION/ATTENTION**



**SLOWER SPEED
OF THINKING**



**MEMORY
CHALLENGES**

Other difficulties may arise depending on the type/location of injury or illness.