



VA | Defining
HEALTH CARE | **EXCELLENCE**
in the 21st Century



PATIENT HANDBOOK

Unit Orientation
Acute Medical-
Surgical Care



**GULF COAST VETERANS
HEALTH CARE SYSTEM**

Revised Feb. 2014

Biloxi, Mississippi

We Want You on Our Team!

You and your family are important members of your health care team. You may notice changes in how you are feeling and in your health before anyone else does. If you tell us, we can take care of the problem before it becomes an emergency.

Contact the nearest staff member immediately if:

- you are not getting better
- you feel worse, badly, “different” or “strange”
- you are having new problems
- your heart is beating too fast or differently
- your pain is worse
- you are having more trouble breathing than usual
- you are having trouble thinking
- you have chest pain
- you have concerns you want us to know about
- something “just isn’t right”

We are here to take care of you and value your input. Once you tell a staff member of any changes, he or she may contact a specially trained team. This team is ready any time day or night to guide the staff in treatment choices specific for your condition. They may come to your bedside if needed.

***Help us help you.
Tell us about your condition.
Ask questions and be part of the team!***

Produced by Janette Howard and a National Group of Patient Educators, 3/26/08



We care...



Integrity | Commitment | Advocacy | Respect | Excellence



Thank you, Veterans!





Welcome to the Acute Medical- Surgical Care Unit!

Welcome to the Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System. We are glad you chose us to provide your health care needs. We want you to be satisfied so you will come back if you need us again. Our mission is to provide you with the highest quality medical care. Our staff is dedicated to making your stay as pleasant and comfortable as possible, while following your treatment care plan. This handbook tells you things you need to know as a patient during your stay with us.

Your Health Care Team Members

A team of health care professionals will take care of you. Each team member has special training and expertise. Your team consists of the following:

- Doctor(s)/Nurse Practitioner(s)/Physician Assistant(s)
- Clinical Nurse Leader
- Nurses
 - Registered Nurses (RN)
 - Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN)
 - Nursing Assistants (NA)
- Social Worker

- Dietitian
- Pharmacist

Other services may be included in your health care team depending on your treatment plan:

- Rehabilitation Therapies
 - Physical Therapy
 - Kinesiotherapy
 - Occupational Therapy
- Speech Therapy/Audiology
- Psychology
- Chaplain
- Recreational Therapy
- Dentist
- Other Specialists

There is a bulletin board in your room. The names of your RN, LPN and NA are written on your board every day. The board also includes names of the unit nurse managers.

Doctor Visits:

You will be assigned a doctor when you are admitted. Your doctor visits you daily Monday through Friday. Your doctor can meet with you and your family between 8 a.m. and 10 a.m.

A staff doctor is available after 4 p.m. and on weekends and holidays.

Mail Service: Hospital Address

Mail is delivered Monday through Friday. Ask a staff member to assist you if you need help reading your mail. Mail sent to you while you are a patient should be addressed as follows:

Your Name
Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System
Unit 30-4, Room *(insert your room number)*
400 Veterans Ave.
Biloxi, MS 39531

All mail received after your discharge will be sent to your home address. Make sure we have your current address.

Stamps must be put on all outgoing mail. Stamps can be purchased in the Canteen retail store. You can also buy stamps from the stamp machine on the second floor of Building 1. The machine is in the central hallway by the elevators.

There is a box available at the nurse's station for outgoing mail.

Flowers

If you receive flowers, they will be delivered to your room. Plants and flowers are not allowed in isolation rooms.

Visiting Hours

Visiting hours are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily. Children under 13 years old are not allowed on the acute care wards. A family member may stay with you overnight.

Clothing and Valuables

Patients are asked to keep one set of clothing and footwear.

Bring to the hospital:

- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Shaving kit
- Deodorant
- Toiletries
- Eyeglasses
- Hearing aid
- Dentures
- About \$5 to \$10 in cash

Send home:

- Jewelry
- Watches
- Money (except as noted above)
- Credit cards
- Electric scooters

If there is no one to take your valuables home, ask your nurse to have them locked in the hospital vault.

The hospital is not responsible for lost or stolen property.

Leave at home:

- Alcoholic beverages
- Your medicines
- Large amounts of cash
- Firearms
- Flammable liquids
- Sharp objects such as knives, razors, and glass
- Electrical appliances that must be plugged into an outlet, such as heating pads, space heaters, hair dryers, hot plates, coffee pots, radios, etc.

All electrical equipment is subject to a safety inspection by Engineering Service.

Items not allowed on the unit will be taken and stored in a safe place if you cannot send them home. These items will be returned to you when you are discharged.

Patient Search

Weapons:

Weapons of any kind are not permitted on VA grounds. This is for your safety as well as the safety of others. Anyone entering buildings on the VA grounds must consent to inspection if asked. Refusal to consent is basis for denial of admission of entry onto VA property.

Search Conditions:

Patients and personal belongings may be searched under the following conditions:

- When admitted or transferred to a closed psychiatric ward
- Incident to a lawful arrest by VA police
- Under a compelling condition such as:
 - Patient threatens to shoot, harm, or kill self or someone else
 - Patient is believed to have concealed potentially harmful items.
 - *Concealed items pose threat to safety of patient and/or others.*

Safety

We are committed to keeping you safe. You can help.

- When you are admitted, you will be given an identification wristband. **Wear your ID band at all times.** Your ID band contains your name and other important information.
- Check the information on your ID band to make sure it is correct. If the information is not correct, tell your nurse immediately.
- Make sure the staff checks your ID band before any procedure, surgery or treatments.
- Make sure the nurse scans your ID band before giving you any medicine.
- **Always lock a wheelchair** before getting in and out of it.
- Make sure everyone washes his or her hands before touching you.
- Do not attempt to get out of bed alone if you are on bed rest or your side rails are up. **Call the nursing staff to assist you.**
- **Ask questions about anything you do not understand.**

Fire and Disaster Drills

The medical center has a fire and disaster plan. Practice drills are held to provide prompt and efficient action if there is a fire or disaster. An alarm will sound if there is a fire. Remain calm and follow the staff's directions if there is a fire alarm or suspected disaster.

Room Telephone and Television Service

Telephone:

The telephone at your bedside is for your personal use.

To make a local call outside the VA, dial "9" and the seven digit number.

You must pay for long distance calls.

You can charge calls:

- to your home phone
- to a calling card
- by calling collect

To make a long distance call, dial "9", then dial "O" for the operator. When using a calling card, dial "9" and then the toll free number on your card. To make a collect call, dial "9" and then 1-800-COLLECT, or dial the number on your calling card.

Family and friends may call you directly by dialing (228) 523 + the room extension on your telephone.

Television:

TVs are in every room. A wide variety of programming is available. Closed-captioned TV is also available. Contact the nursing staff for instructions to change to closed-captioned viewing.

Hospital Channels:

- Patient Education: Channel 14
- Movies: Channel 15
- Religious: Channel 17

What to Expect While You Are in the Hospital

Medicines:

Do not bring any medicines from home with you. Instead, bring a list of your medicines and include the following:

- over-the-counter medicines
- vitamins
- herbals
- dietary supplements
- medications you receive from non-VA physicians

Your doctor will order the medicines you are to take while you are in the hospital.

If you bring medicines from home, have a friend or family member take them home. If this is not possible, tell your nurse. Your medicines will be sent to the pharmacy and then mailed to your home.

Do not take any medicine that is not given to you by your nurse. Your nurse should always scan your ID band before

giving you any medicine. The nurse will also scan the bar code on each medicine before giving it to you. This is for your safety.

Meals:

Your doctor will order a diet to suit your medical care. Meals are delivered to your room:

- **Breakfast:** between 7:30 a.m. and 7:45 a.m.
- **Lunch:** between 12:30 p.m. and 12:45 p.m.
- **Dinner:** between 5:30 p.m. and 5:45 p.m.

Tell your nurse if you do not receive a tray.

Some tests and procedures must be done before you eat. If one of these is ordered for you, your nurse will let you know. You will get your meal as soon as possible after the test or procedure. Tell your nurse if you do not receive your meal.

If you have questions about your meal or nutrition, ask your nurse to call your dietitian.

Signing In and Out:

Unless you are being taken off the unit by a staff member, sign out when leaving the unit. This is for your safety and to make sure you do not miss your medicines, appointments and/or treatments. The sign-out book is located at the nursing station. Sign back in when you return to the unit.

If you are a telemetry patient, you are encouraged not to leave the unit.

Smoking:

Smoking is not permitted inside the buildings or near the buildings. There is a designated smoking area on the first floor of Building 1.

We encourage you not to smoke while in the medical center. Your doctor can order smoking cessation aids to help you with the cravings. If you would like to quit smoking, ask your doctor to refer you to a Stop Smoking Program.

Pain Control:

We are concerned about your pain and want you to receive the best pain relief possible. You will be asked to rate your pain on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 being no pain and 10 being the most severe).

You don't have to wait to be asked if you are having pain. Tell your nurse and doctor if you are having pain.

Procedures:

Your doctor may order tests and/or procedures to help diagnose and treat your illness. Your doctor and/or nurse will explain the tests and/or procedures in terms you understand. If they use terms you do not understand, tell them and ask them to explain it in terms you do understand.

Advance Directive:

Adults have the right to make decisions about their health care. These decisions include whether to withhold or withdraw life support. You and your family are encouraged to make your wishes known by making an Advance

Directive. Talk to your social worker if you need information or help with an Advance Directive.

Voting Assistance:

Contact the Voluntary Services Officer at extension 35763 or extension 35786 for voting information.

Infection Prevention

Hand Hygiene:

- The most important thing for you to do to prevent infections is to wash or clean your hands often.
- Wash your hands with soap and water when they look or feel dirty. Rub your palms, the back of your hands and between your fingers for at least 15 seconds. Rinse and dry well.
- If your hands do not look or feel dirty you can use the sanitizing hand rub conveniently located throughout the hospital and in every inpatient room. Dispense it into your hands and rub onto all surfaces until dry.
- Remind staff, family and visitors to wash or clean their hands often.
- It's okay to ask your health care providers if they have washed their hands.

Respiratory Etiquette:

- Cover your cough. You may be asked to put on a surgical mask.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze or cough or sneeze into your upper

sleeve, not your hands.

- Wash or clean your hands often when you are coughing or sneezing.

Multi-Drug Resistant Organisms:

- A MDRO is a germ that has become more difficult to treat.
- You can be either infected or colonized by an MDRO. Infected means the germ is making you sick. Colonized means you have the germ but it is not making you sick.
- The easiest way to spread a MDRO is by contact with hands.
- If you are found to have a MDRO during your hospital stay, special precautions called Contact Precautions will be started to protect other patients:
 - A colored sticker will be placed on the outside of your door to remind people entering to wear appropriate personal protective equipment inside your room (for example, gown, gloves, etc.).
 - Stay in your room as much as possible — if you do leave, wash or clean your hands before leaving your room and when you return to your room.
 - Health care workers will wear gloves and gowns when caring for you.
 - If you have any questions about MDRO, ask your clinician or nurse.
 - Wash or clean your hands often and remind friends and visitors to do so too.
- Some examples of MDRO are:
 - **Methicillin Resistant**

Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA)
Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System screens patients for MRSA when they are admitted. The MRSA test is done by inserting a cotton swab carefully into your nose. It does not hurt, but it may tickle. You will be swabbed again if you transfer units while in the hospital and when you are discharged. If you test positive for MRSA, you will be told and given additional education. (You may refuse nasal swabbing at any time.)

- **Vancomycin Resistant Enterococcus (VRE)**
- **Clostridium difficile (C. diff)**

Discharge Procedures

Your discharge planning begins when you are admitted. You will be told your expected discharge date and time as soon as possible. Your treatment team will work with you to make plans to assist in meeting your discharge goals. Tell the staff if you have special needs for equipment (shower chairs, toilet seats, etc.) that will make your transition to home care easier.

If your doctor orders discharge medicines, you or your family must pick them up. The medicines can be picked up in the Outpatient Pharmacy Monday through Thursday from 8 a.m. until 7 p.m., Friday from 8 a.m. until 7:30 p.m. or Saturday from 8 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.

The outpatient pharmacy is located in Building 3 on the first floor.

Medicines can be picked up at the inpatient pharmacy after Outpatient Pharmacy hours and on Sundays and holidays. The inpatient pharmacy is located in Building 1 on the second floor.

If you are picking up your medicine, you must be wearing your ID band. If a family member is picking up your medicines, he or she must show your VA ID card.

Patient Surveys

If you receive a formal survey following your care, fill it out and mail it back to us. It is part of our program to continue to improve patient care. You may be surveyed about your care during your hospital stay.

Tell us about any concerns during your stay so we can make it right before your discharge.

You can also write a note about your care and concerns and put it in a "Tell it to the Director" box. These boxes are located throughout the health care system.

Other Services

Canteen:

Coffee, meals and snacks are served in the hospital Canteen. It is located in Building 1 on the second floor. It is open between 7 a.m. and 1 p.m., Monday through Friday. Vending machines are also located in this area.

The main Canteen offers cafeteria services (Building 21), a retail store (Building 57) and dry cleaning. The retail store is open weekdays from 7 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. It has a variety of food choices and goods available for purchase.

Newspaper stand locations:

- Outside of Building 1
- Outside the Canteen retail store

ATM:

An automated teller machine is located in Building 1, on the second floor across from the elevators.

Religious Services:

Our chaplains make daily rounds. Tell the nurse if you want to see a chaplain.

Housekeeping:

Your room is cleaned daily. Tell the nursing staff if you have concerns about the cleanliness of your room.

Parking:

Visitors can use the free parking garage.

Send your vehicle home while you are an inpatient. If this is not possible, tell your nurse. Your nurse will notify the hospital police. They will move your vehicle to a patrolled lot. They will keep your keys and return them to you when you are discharged.

If you are being picked up at discharge, your driver can park his or her vehicle at the curb to pick you up.

Organ Donation/ Transplantation

The organ and tissue donation program offers hope to patients who are seriously ill and need a transplant. If you have decided to be an organ donor, make sure your family is aware of your decision. You should also carry a donor card. If you would like to become an organ donor, talk with your doctor, family and clergy. Your social worker can help you complete the necessary forms.

If you are a candidate for organ transplantation, your doctor will keep you informed of your status.

Patient Advocates/ Representatives

A patient or family member may have an issue which requires our attention. The best time to let us know of any concern or question is when it happens so we can resolve it as quickly as possible. Our highly skilled Patient Advocates are eager to help you with your concern in a timely manner.

Patient Advocates:

- Serve as liaisons between patients and the medical center
- Act on the patient's behalf
- Help patients understand their rights and responsibilities
- **Biloxi Facility:** (228) 523-5761 or (228) 523-5760
- **Joint Ambulatory Care Center (JACC):** (850) 912-2050

Patient Rights and Responsibilities

Veterans Health Administration (VHA) employees will respect and support your rights as a patient. We are pleased you have selected us to provide your health care. We plan to make your visit or stay as pleasant for you as possible. Your basic rights and responsibilities are outlined here. Talk with VA treatment team members or a Patient Advocate if you have any questions or would like more information about your rights.

1 |

Nondiscrimination and Respect:

- You will be treated with dignity, compassion and respect as an individual.
- Consistent with federal law, VA policy and accreditation standards of The Joint Commission, you will not be subject to discrimination for any reason, including for reasons of age, race, ethnicity, religion, culture, language, physical or mental disability, socioeconomic status, sex, sexual orientation, or gender identity or expression.
- You will receive care in a safe environment free from excess noise and with sufficient light to ensure comfort and safety. You will have the right to access to the outdoors.
- We will seek to honor your cultural and personal values, beliefs and preferences. We ask you to identify any cultural, religious or spiritual beliefs that influence your care.
- You have the right to keep and spend your money and receive accounting of any funds VA is holding for you.
- You have the right to personal freedoms in the care and treatment we provide to you. This includes trying to accommodate your normal sleep and wake cycles, your food likes and dislikes, and other personal preferences.
- In the inpatient acute care setting, and only in rare cases, will we use chemical or physical restraints and only if all other efforts to keep you or others free from harm have not worked.
- You have the right to keep personal items and are allowed to wear your own clothes depending on circumstances and your medical condition.
- You have the right to keep and use personal items as long as they are safe and legal.
- You have the right to social action and regular exercise. You will have the opportunity for religious worship and spiritual support. You may decide whether to participate in these activities. You may decide whether or not to perform tasks in or for the medical center.
- You have the right to communicate freely and privately. You will have access to public telephones. VA will assist you in sending and receiving mail. You may participate in civic rights such as voting and free speech.
- You have the right to involve loved ones in your support and care as a VA patient. VA considers a patient's family to include anyone related to the patient in any way (biologi-

cally or legally) and anyone whom the patient considers to be family. Patients in acute inpatient units may choose any person to be with them in support during their stay. Medical staff may restrict visitors on acute inpatient units if medical or safety concerns require it. Patients will be promptly told about any visitor restrictions and the reason for the restriction.

- You have the right to a safe treatment environment. All patient, visitors and staff are expected to avoid unsafe acts that place others at risk for accidents or injuries. You have the responsibility to immediately report any condition you believe to be unsafe.

2 | Information Disclosure and Confidentiality

- Your privacy will be protected.
- You will be given information about the health benefits you can receive. The information will be provided in a way you can understand.
- You will receive information about the costs of your care, if any, before you are treated. You are responsible for paying for your portion of the costs associated with your care.
- Your medical record will be kept confidential. Information about you will not be released without your consent unless authorized by law (that is, State public health reporting). You have the right to information in

your medical record and may request a copy of your records. This will be provided, except in rare situations where your VA physician feels the information will be harmful to you. In that situation, you have the right to have this discussed with you by your VA provider.

- You will be informed of all outcomes of care, including any injuries caused by your medical care. You will be informed about how to request compensation for injuries.
- You have the responsibility to respect the privacy of other patients and not to reveal any health information you may overhear or otherwise learn.

3 | Participation in Treatment Decisions

- You have a right to express your preferences concerning future medical care in an Advance Directive, including designating a health care agent to make health care decisions on your behalf if you can no longer do so.
- You, and any persons you choose, will be involved in all decisions about your care. You will be given information you can understand about the benefits and risks of treatment. You will be given other options. You can agree to or refuse treatment. Refusing treatment will not affect your rights to future care but you have the responsibility to understand the possible results to your health. If you believe you cannot follow the treat-

ment plan, you have a responsibility to notify the treatment team.

- You have a responsibility to tell your provider about your current condition, medicines (including over the counter and herbals) and medical history. Also, share any other information that affects your health. You should ask questions when you don't understand something about your care. This will help in providing you the best care possible.
- You will be given, in writing, the name and professional title of the provider in charge of your care. As a partner in the health care process, you have the right to be involved in choosing your provider. Your providers will properly introduce themselves when providing care.
- You will be educated about your role and responsibilities as a patient. This includes your participation in decision making and care at the end of life.
- You have the right to have your pain assessed and to receive treatment to manage your pain. You and your treatment team will develop a pain management plan together. You are expected to help the treatment team by telling them if you have pain and if the treatment is working.
- You will be provided any transportation necessary for your treatment plan.
- You have the right to choose whether or not you will participate in any research project. Any research will be clearly identified. Potential risks of the research will be identified. There will

be no pressure on you to participate.

- You will be included in resolving any ethical issues about your care. You may consult with the medical center's Ethics Committee and/or other staff who know about health care ethics.

4 |

Concerns or Complaints

- You are encouraged and expected to seek help from your treatment team and/or a Patient Advocate if you have problems or complaints. Any privacy complaints will be addressed by the facility Privacy Officer. You will be given understandable information about the complaint process available to you. You may complain verbally or in writing without fear of retaliation.
- If you believe you or a family member has been neglected, abused or exploited by VA staff, you should report it promptly to the treatment team or a Patient Advocate.
- If you believe the organization has failed to address or satisfy your concerns about health care quality and safety, you may contact The Joint Commission's Office of Quality and Monitoring at 1-800-994-6610. If you believe the organization has failed to address your concerns about suspected criminal activities, fraud, waste, abuse or mismanagement, you may contact the VA Office of the Inspector General at 1-800-488-8244 or by email to vaighotline@va.gov.

Joint Commission Notice to the Public

The Joint Commission standards deal with organization quality, safety-of-care issues, and the safety of the environment in which care is provided. Any individual, who has concerns about patient care and safety in the hospital that has not been addressed, is encouraged to contact the hospital's management department. If the concerns cannot be resolved through the hospital, the individual is encouraged by the hospital to contact The Joint Commission.

Division of Accreditation Operations
Office of Quality Monitoring
Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
One Renaissance Boulevard
Oakbrook Terrace, IL 60181

Or

Faxed to (630) 792-5636

Or

Email to complaint@jointcommission.org

This notice is posted in accordance with The Joint Commission's requirements. No disciplinary actions will be taken against any employee who reports safety or quality of care concerns to The Joint Commission.

You may also contact the Patient Advocate at a VA site if you have any concerns or questions or visit <http://www.biloxi.va.gov/patients/customerservice.asp>.

Biloxi, Miss. (228) 523-5761
Mobile, Ala. (251) 219-3908
Pensacola, Fla. (850) 912-2050
Gulf Coast Veterans Health Care System
Patient Advocate Supervisor (228) 523-5760

GULF COAST VETERANS HEALTH CARE SYSTEM
400 Veterans Ave., Biloxi, MS 39531



Reviewed and
Approved
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