



Handbook for
Trauma Patients and Their Families



Your life is our life's work.

This handbook has been developed for you by Mercy Hospital St. Louis Trauma Center in collaboration with the Trauma Survivor’s Network (TSN) of the American Trauma Society. We hope this information will help you and your loved ones during the hospital stay.

At the back of this handbook there’s room for you to take notes and write down questions for the hospital staff. You can use this to make sure you get all your questions answered.

We also encourage you to visit the TSN website at **traumasurvivorsnetwork.org** to learn about the services this program provides. You can also use this website to keep your friends and family informed during your loved one’s hospital stay.

Mercy Mission Statement:

As the Sisters of Mercy before us, we bring to life the healing ministry of Jesus through our compassionate care and exceptional service.

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More trauma information is located at: **traumasurvivorsnetwork.org**.

Introduction

We're Here To Help

Trauma is an unexpected occurrence. Hardly anyone thinks, "I'm going to get hurt today." A sudden injury, being in the hospital and going through recovery can cause anxiety, fear and frustration. You may feel confused and frightened by some things you hear and see. You may not understand some words that people use. This experience of advanced medical care may be a whole new world for you.

We hope the information in this book will help you better cope during this difficult time. It includes basic facts about the most common types of injuries and their treatments, the patient care process, and hospital services and policies.

There's space within this book to take notes. We encourage you to write down questions that you have for the doctors and staff. Every member of the hospital staff is here to help you.

Immediately After the Injury - Arrival at the Hospital



Here's What's Happened So Far...

Most likely, you or your loved one was brought to the Emergency Department by an ambulance or helicopter. The trauma staff can tell you which service brought you or your loved one to the hospital.

During the transport, the rescue crew was in radio contact with the hospital. They gave information about you or your loved one's injuries. This allows the team at the trauma center to be ready to provide treatment as quickly as possible.

The trauma team typically includes:

- Trauma surgeons
- Emergency doctors
- Nurse practitioners
- Nurses
- Respiratory therapist
- X-ray staff
- Social worker

The team is ready 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Also, board-certified specialty doctors are on call to help with care.

Initial Assessment

Trauma care at the hospital begins in the Emergency Department (ED). It includes:

- An exam to find life-threatening injuries
- X-rays, ultrasound and perhaps a CT scan so that doctors can better understand the extent of the injuries
- If needed, transfer to the OR for surgery; the OR is staffed by an expert team
- Transfer from the admitting area, ED or OR to a unit in the hospital

How the Hospital Cares for the Family

Initially, the patient is evaluated in the ED. Please note that the ED is under restricted access. While the patient is being assessed, family can't be present in the room. A member of the medical team will keep the family and friends informed. Every attempt will be made to update the family as soon as possible.

Why a Patient May Have a Fake Name

Sometimes the hospital does not know the name of the patient. To make sure that doctors can match the right lab and other reports with that patient, the hospital may give the person a fake name. These names may be a name of a national or international city name "Trauma Nashville" or "Trauma Dublin".

The fake (alias) name may have made it hard for you to locate your loved one at first. When hospital staff can be sure of your loved one's name, they change to the real name.

If the patient is a victim of crime, they may keep this fake name. This is for safety reasons.



Visitors Are Important

Visiting is a time to be with your loved one, ask questions and meet with staff. Research shows that comforting visits from friends and family help most patients to heal. Family and close friends know the patient better than anyone else and can make a difference in treatment. Visiting is often a good time to begin learning how to take care of your loved one at home.

You may have to wait before you can visit your loved one. Visits are often limited for patients with brain injuries because they need quiet to recover.

We're Here to Help

Feel free to ask for help finding a patient room, department, etc. All our employees, doctors and volunteers wear ID badges.

The Health Care Team Needs a Family's Help

The primary job of the trauma unit team is to treat patients. We need your help in taking care of your loved one and making sure they get the best care possible. Here are things you can do to help us and your loved one.

Take Care of Yourself

Worry and stress are hard on you, and you need strength to offer support to your loved one. The trauma unit team understands that this time can be just as stressful for family and friends as it is for patients.

Be sure to continue taking any medicines that your doctor has prescribed for you. Take breaks. Go for a walk around the hospital campus. Getting plenty of sleep and eating regular meals not only helps you think better but also helps you keep up your strength to prevent illness, so you can be there for your loved one when you're needed.

Ask for Help from Your Family and Friends

Don't hesitate to ask for help. Make a list in the back of this book so you'll be prepared to accept help when friends offer. Friends often appreciate being able to help and be involved in the patient's care.

Visit the Trauma Survivors Network website at traumasurvivorsnetwork.org and find out how you can create your own "CarePage". This makes it easy for you to connect with friends and family.

Ask Questions and Stay Informed

The trauma team knows how important regular updates are to family and friends. The family is an important part of the health care team. It helps if you choose one person from your group to represent the family. This allows staff to focus on caring for the patient instead of repeating the same updates.

When you think of questions during the day, write them down. Be sure to ask your doctor these questions when you see them. You'll want to ask questions until you understand the diagnoses and options for treatment. It's all right

to ask the same question twice. Stress makes it hard to understand and remember new information. Ask until you understand. Write down what you're told so you can accurately report the information to other family members.

Help Maintain a Restful and Healing Place

When you're visiting, please talk in a quiet voice. Patients need quiet, and families deserve your courtesy. To help maintain a healthy environment for patients and their families, the hospital counts on your help. Please:

- Observe the visiting hours for the area you're visiting
- Don't sleep in patient rooms or waiting rooms unless you have permission
- Respect other patients' right to privacy
- Leave the patient room or care area when asked by hospital staff

- Knock or call the patient's name softly before entering, if a door or curtain is closed
- Respect that the medical record is a private document
- Wash your hands before you go into a patient's room and when you come out
- Don't visit if you're not feeling well or have an illness that could be transferred to our patients
- Talk with the patient's nurse before bringing any children under the age of 14 into a patient's room
- For the safety of young children, provide adult supervision in all areas of the hospital
- Respect the property of other people and of the hospital
- Don't ask other patients and families about private details of their care
- Respect the rights of all patients and hospital staff

"In your darkest day, know that it is only temporary."

~Jen, Trauma Survivor

Where Patients Stay While in the Hospital

After patients are evaluated by doctors, they are moved to another unit in the hospital. Where they're moved to depends on their injury.

Patients may first go to the intensive care unit. When they're ready, they may then move to a step-down unit. They may also go to another unit in the hospital. Patients are only moved from one unit to another when the trauma team believes they're ready.

The hospital staff does its best to let family and friends know when a patient is moved from one unit to another. If your loved one has been moved and you don't know where they've been moved to, please call the hospital operator at 314-251-6000.

Hospital Units that Care for Trauma Patients:

Trauma Intensive Care Unit (ICU)

Patients in the ICU receive care from a team of doctors and nurses who've been trained to care for seriously injured patients. The first step is to make sure the patient is medically stable. Medically stable means that all body systems are working. As the patient is being treated, the team begins to plan with the patient and family. This plan will help the patient return to as normal a life as possible, as quickly and as safely as possible.

Transitional Care Unit (TCU)

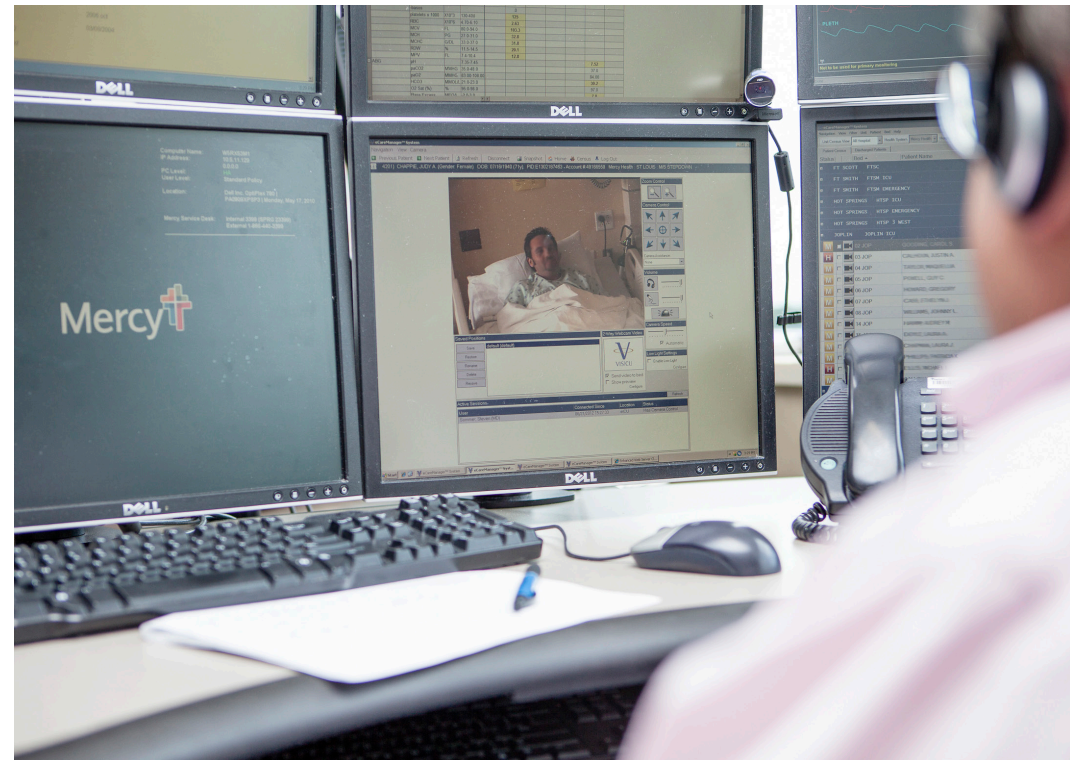
As patients in the ICU improve, they're often moved to a step-down unit. Patients may also go straight from the admitting area to this type of unit. This happens if they don't need the care provided in the ICU.

Medical and Surgical Care Units

Less severely injured patients may be moved to another unit in the hospital. Also, those who no longer require the care found in ICU or TCU may be moved to these units.

A Typical Day in the ICU

Most patients are attached to equipment that gives doctors and nurses important information, enabling them to make the best decisions. This equipment monitors the patient and may deliver medicine or help the patient breathe.



Don't worry if you hear alarms. Some alarms do not need immediate attention. The staff knows which ones to respond to.

In the morning, the trauma team "rounds" to each patient's bed to do exams, check progress and plan the patient's care. This time is valuable for everyone involved in the care of your loved one. Family members are encouraged to be involved in the patient's plan of care.

Physical therapists, occupational therapists and nursing staff work together to help patients begin to move normally and regain strength. For instance, they may;

- Raise the head of the bed
- Turn a patient every two hours
- Help a patient sit on the bed or in a chair

Patients may be moved to other areas of the hospital for tests. During this time, other patients may be brought into the unit. You can expect a busy place. Sometimes, the staff asks all visitors to leave the unit to preserve a patient's privacy.

Who Takes Care of the Patient

Many types of caregivers may take care of your loved one while he or she is in the hospital. Different patients will need different types of care. Here's a list of the kinds of doctors, nurses and other caregivers you may meet or hear about.

Anesthesia and Pain Management Specialists

These specialists are specifically trained to work with patients who are in pain. They create a plan to ease pain and improve quality of life. Treatments may include:

- Medications
- Implanting pumps or nerve stimulators
- Physical therapy or behavioral programs

Care Manager

All admitted patients have care management services available to them. Care managers can help you through your stay in the hospital. They can work with your insurance company to ensure appropriate management of your benefits. They may also assist you with the following post-discharge services, if needed:

- Ordering supplies for at home
- Referring you to a home care agency
- Helping you get continued care with a specialist
- Coordinating your transfer to a rehabilitation center

Chaplain

Chaplains have special skills to help people during times of illness. They meet the spiritual needs of patients and families from many different religions. Chaplains visit all who want spiritual support.

This department provides:

- Pastoral care visits
- Pastoral counseling
- Worship
- Memorial services
- Support groups

Pastoral Care can be contacted by phone at 314-251-6000. You can also make a request through the medical team.

Dietitian

Dietitians are the food and nutrition experts. They work closely with the trauma team in caring for patients. For example, if a patient needs a feeding tube at home, the dietitian explains the proper diet.

Neurosurgeon

Neurosurgeons are doctors who are trained in surgery for the brain or spinal cord.



Nurse

Nurses manage care and recovery of patients. They talk with the trauma team about the patients' care.

Nurse Practitioner

Nurse practitioners are nurses who have advanced training. Patients may be managed by doctors as well as nurse practitioners.

Trauma nurse practitioners:

- Perform physical exams
- Order and interpret tests
- Prescribe medications and other treatments
- Refer patients to other specialists

Occupational Therapist

Occupational therapists help the patients regain strength for daily events.

This includes:

- Getting out of bed
- Eating
- Dressing
- Using the toilet and bathing

They also recommend equipment that can help patients.

Orthopedic Surgeon

Orthopedic surgeons are physicians who have specialized training in repairing broken bones.

Orthopedic Physician Assistant

Orthopedic PAs:

- Cast broken bones
- Change wound dressings
- Set up and maintain treatment equipment such as traction
- Place splints on injured arms and legs
- Perform physical exams/consultations
- Order and interpret tests
- Prescribe medications and other treatments
- Coordinate care with the trauma team and other specialists

Pharmacist

Pharmacists are medicine experts who work closely with nurses and doctors to determine the most effective medication for patients.

Physiatrist or Rehabilitation Medicine Physician

Physiatrists are doctors who use a number of tests and exams to plan a patient's rehabilitation. They prescribe devices, including wheelchairs, braces and artificial limbs. Their goal is to help the patient live independently.

Physical Therapist

Physical therapists help patients regain their strength and movement. They also help with stiff joints and other problems with moving and wound healing.

Psychologist

Psychologists are licensed mental health professionals. A psychologist is not a medical doctor but has advanced training at the masters or doctoral level (a PhD or PsyD).

Psychiatrist

Psychiatrists are medical doctors (MDs) who treat mental and emotional disorders. Psychiatrists can prescribe medication.

Resident

Residents are licensed physicians who are getting more training in a specialty. They provide patient care and keep the attending doctor informed of each patient's progress.

Respiratory Therapist

Respiratory therapists provide breathing support and treatments. Respiratory therapists are specially trained and state licensed.

Social Worker

Social workers help patients and family members adjust to the injury. Hospital social workers specialize in medical and crisis counseling. They talk with patients and the medical team. They also help patients and families with services both within the hospital and in the community. The social worker also may help ease the change from hospital to home.

Speech and Language Therapist

Speech therapists work with patients on language, memory and swallowing problems, often under the direction of a physiatrist. They may also evaluate hearing.

Trauma Surgeon

Trauma surgeons are doctors who have years of training in trauma surgery. A trauma surgeon is in the hospital 24 hours a day. They will oversee the total care of you or your family member in the hospital. They regularly visit patients to check on their progress and coordinate with other members of the trauma team.

Trauma Survivors Network Coordinator

The Trauma Survivors Network (TSN) coordinator helps coordinate support throughout your recovery. The TSN coordinator is specially trained by the American Trauma Society and the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health to provide helpful resources and support during recovery from major injury.

This booklet is provided as a public service by the American Trauma Society and Mercy Hospital St. Louis Trauma office. The booklet is based on a Trauma handbook developed by the Inova Regional Trauma Center at the Inova Fairfax Hospital and Inova Fairfax Hospital for Children in Falls Church, Virginia.

