

You Should Know

I swipe my ID badge on the scanner and enter through the big wooden doors. I walk along the long yellow walled hallways to my locker where I organize my stuff and prepare myself for the long night ahead. My night shift will go from 6pm to 6am and I am unsure of what I will encounter. Tonight I wear dark purple scrubs and black clogs. I have on my thick framed light blue glasses on my face and my dark brown, naturally wavy hair pulled up in a bun. The bags under my eyes and the coffee mug in my hand indicate my long days spent with my children, and my determination to take on this 12 hour shift even though I might end up going crazy.

“We have a 23 year old woman in room 4 with a broken arm from skiing up at Monarch this morning”, my co worker informs me. “ Alright I’ll take it”, I say as I grab my patients paperwork filled clipboard and venture off. Before I enter room 4, I stick my hand under the shiny white dispenser and squirt some sanitation foam into my hands. The sign above it reads “Foam in, Foam out”. Sanitation is strictly enforced when in a place where sickness and disease is quite common.

I enter the room, say hello to the patient and family and start to check their vitals. I inform them of the patient’s diagnosis, what medications they are going to take, how to treat their injury, instructions, and answer any questions they have. They are required to sign paperwork to show they are aware of what's happening and agree to the conditions. I then discharge them, and prepare for my next patient. I go sanitize the previous patient’s room, talk with the other nurses, crack a joke, or grab another cup of coffee.

People will ask me, “Why are you an ER nurse? Isn’t it hard?” Why yes it is, I have to deal with blood, throw up, cardiac arrest, broken bones, even death, and so much more. I had to learn how to be patient with people, tend to their needs, and react quickly in life threatening situations. But I became an ER nurse because I love helping people and love knowing that I'm making a difference and sometimes saving a life. I leave the hospital each morning exhausted and depleted, but find myself there again two days later and ready for another unpredictable night. My name is Amy Barton, and I am an ER nurse at Heart of the Rockies Regional Medical Center.