



New Grad?

Be Prepared to Look Great

by Karla A. Knight

You've landed that first job. Congratulations! You will need to look professional and carry certain equipment to practice the art and science of nursing appropriately and effectively.

Dina Juhasz, RN, BSN, nurse recruiter, Children's Hospital, Boston, is accustomed to assuring new grads that they can fit in to their new work environments. Juhasz advises, "Go conservative until you know your work environment better. New grads need to think about how they want to present themselves as professionals. "It's not that they shouldn't be themselves," she adds, "but they should balance the culture and practices of the institution with who they are as a person." Most importantly, she recommends that you think about how you, as a new nurse, want to introduce yourself to others — not just what you say, but how you look and what you do. "This first 'introduction' stays with the people you meet for about six months!" adds Juhasz. As you walk through the doors of your first job as an RN, Juhasz also offers the following tips:

Keep clothing simple. Certain patient care areas require a uniform, such as scrubs, and some require street clothes with a lab coat. Current styles, such as low-cut pants, crop tops, and see-through apparel, are clearly not appropriate for a professional appearance.





Wear an accurate watch. You will need it for patient care, and to be on time for your appointments!

Make sure your clothing properly covers your body. Bare midriffs and any exposed undergarments are definitely unacceptable. If you have a tattoo, keep it covered!

“Feet first.” Do not wear sandals or open-toed shoes, no matter how good your pedicure is! This is not just for appearance’s sake. Flip-flops and sandals present infection control issues as well as safety concerns for you and your patients. Closed-toe, well fitting, and comfortable shoes are in keeping with a professional image. Clogs, formerly maligned in the workplace, are now permitted.

Don’t forget your nametag. This is an important part of who you are on the job and identifies you to patients as an RN. Most employers will issue you required photo ID badges for security reasons. For your safety and that of your patients, they should either be clip-on or on a lanyard.

Minimize jewelry and makeup. Rings other than flat bands, bracelets, and necklaces, all present safety concerns for both the wearer and the patient, so select your jewelry carefully. If you have pierced ears, wear studs or very small hoops. Dangling earrings and large hoops are unsafe while working with patients. Makeup should be

minimal and should not distract from your appearance.

Simplify hair. Long hair should be pulled back for infection control reasons, as you don’t want your hair falling into your field while you’re doing a sterile dressing. Although there are no specific policies about hair length or color, being conservative might help you feel more comfortable in your new work environment.

Forgo your acrylic nails.

Acrylic fingernails harbor bacteria and present an infection control problem, so they are usually forbidden in most direct patient care areas, and definitely in the OR. Check your employer’s guidelines on this.

Skip the scent. Some work environments prohibit the use of scented products altogether due to the increasing number of people who are scent-sensitive.

Bring your own stethoscope and bandage scissors.

While these items might be provided on the unit, there’s never one available when you need one! You can buy stethoscopes online or find a medical supply company to compare different types.

Watch your watch.

Wear an accurate watch. You will need it for patient care, and to be on time for your appointments!

Get a second opinion.

Find someone you trust who can provide feedback on your appearance. Looking neat and professional will help ensure your success on the job! ☺

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