



CARDIAC SURGERY: HOME INSTRUCTIONS

SITE CARE AND BATHING

The incision site should be kept clean and dry. **The site should be watched for signs of infection that include redness, swelling or drainage.** If you have a dressing to the incision site, you should change the dressing every other day. The site can be gently washed with soap and water and patted completely dry each day. You should not take a shower or tub bath until you are cleared by the doctor to do so at your follow-up clinic visit. Also, do not put any bandages, lotions, powders, antibiotic creams, or salves on your incision unless your doctor or nurse tells you to. **When the doctor says you may take a bath, have someone nearby the first time you bathe because you may become dizzy or light-headed.**

ACTIVITY

The type and amount of activity after heart surgery vary from patient to patient; however, there are some general guidelines to follow. The most important rule to remember is to avoid overdoing it. You should gradually increase your activity each week. Wear the elastic hose you wore in the hospital each day until you come back to clinic. Plan for periods of rest throughout the day; however, **do not stay in the bed all day. You need to be up and moving each day.** Walk around the house and **gradually increase your activity** to include walking outside. Do not lift more than 10 pounds for the next eight weeks after surgery. **Avoid** strenuous activity, contact sports and household chores that put pressure on your breastbone. Do not drive until your doctor says you may. **If you smoke, absolutely do not continue because smoking will clog up your arteries.** Keeping your weight under control is essential after having heart surgery. Also, cardiac rehab is an option where you can obtain additional information on diet, exercise and risk factor modification for heart disease. This issue can be discussed when you come back to clinic.

RETURN APPOINTMENT

The first appointment after surgery will be scheduled approximately seven to ten days after you are discharged from the hospital. **If you do not receive an appointment when you go home, you can call the cardiovascular (CV) surgery office at (601) 984-5170 to check on your appointment. Make a list of any questions you would like to ask your doctor and bring the list to your appointment. Also, you need to bring all your medications to your appointment each time you come to clinic. Also bring any over-the-counter and/or herbal medications that you are taking.**

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS TO REPORT

Call the doctor if

- you have **unusual shortness of breath**;
- your **temperature is 101 degrees or greater**;
- **the incision site looks infected** (redness, swelling, drainage, or increasing pain at the site);
- you gain three to five pounds in a week;
- you have **swollen ankles, hands or abdomen**; and
- any other symptom that bothers you.

If you have questions or need to contact the doctor, you can call the cardiovascular nurse on weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at (601) 984-5171 or (601) 984-5170. After hours and on weekends, the doctor can be reached by calling (601) 984-1000 and having the operator page the cardiovascular resident on call.

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