

CARDIAC SURGERY

Each person responds differently to heart surgery, whether it is a *Coronary Artery Bypass Grafting or surgery to replace or repair a heart valve*. These instructions are general guidelines. Ask your physician if you have concerns not covered in your discharge instructions.

When you leave the hospital after your heart surgery, you will be given instructions that your doctor will want you to follow. Because you have been less active, expect to tire more quickly. Plan on resting several times a day the first few weeks at home.

Many people feel angry or depressed following heart surgery. This is normal. Sharing these feelings with a loved one can help. Maintain a positive outlook.

Caring for yourself

You can shower as soon as your doctor says it is OK.

- Use warm not hot water
- Avoid soaking baths for a few weeks
- Use a bench or shower stool to help you feel secure

Care of incisions

- Keep the incisions clean and dry
- Use only antibacterial soap (i.e. Dial, Safeguard) and water to clean them
- Call your doctor if you have any signs of infection which include the following:
 - Increased drainage or oozing from incision
 - Opening of the incision
 - Redness or warmth around the incision
 - A persistent fever of 100.5 or greater

Care of Your Surgical Leg

If you had a graft taken for your Coronary Artery Bypass procedure, follow these instructions:

- Keep your incision clean and dry, washing with antibacterial soap and water
- Elevate your leg frequently. Prop it on a pillow or blanket when resting so it is **above the level of the heart** to reduce any swelling
- Avoid sitting in one position or standing for prolonged periods of time

Activity

- Gradually increase your level of activities
 - Walking is one of the best exercises. Start slowly at your own pace
 - Stop to rest when you are tired
 - You can ride as a passenger in a car at any time. Your doctor will tell you when you can start driving
 - Unless restricted by your doctor, you may climb stairs. Avoid using your arms to pull yourself
 - **NO** pushing, pulling or lifting objects heavier than 10 pounds (ex: one gallon of milk is 9 pounds)
- Stop any activity if you feel short of breath, notice irregular heart beats, feel faint or dizzy, or you have chest pain. Rest until symptoms subside. If they do not subside after 20 minutes, notify your doctor.**

Our office phone numbers:

512-459-8753

1-800-766-2365

After hours office number:

512-706-6605

It's Perfectly Normal to.....

- Not have much appetite. It takes several weeks for your appetite to return to normal. Some people feel nauseated at times or their sense of smell may be diminished.
- Have difficulty sleeping. You may find it difficult to fall asleep and you may frequently awaken during the night. This will improve. You may want to take your pain medication before going to bed.
- Have a lump at the top of your incision. This will disappear with time.
- Have numbness and hypersensitivity of the skin on your chest. This will improve over the next few weeks.
- Experience muscle pain or tightness in your shoulders and upper back. Good posture will help this. Having your loved one rub your shoulders may help. You may carefully apply heat, but be very careful.

Making Positive Lifestyle Changes

Exercising and taking care of yourself will help you regain strength and recover faster. Enrolling in a Cardiac Rehabilitation Program that includes exercise sessions, classes, nutrition counseling and support groups may benefit many patients. Ask your doctor if this would benefit you.

Mended Hearts is a national volunteer support group for heart patients and their loved ones. If you would like to speak to someone regarding this, call

1-800-AHAUSA1 or <http://www.mendedhearts.org>.

The Austin phone number is 407-7585.

Follow-up after surgery

Contact our office at 512-459-8753 as soon as you are discharged from the hospital to make a follow-up appointment with your surgeon. If you have questions before your office visit, call your doctor's nurse.

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