

After You Leave the Hospital



Resuming Activities after your Heart Surgery

What are my activity restrictions?

- Do not lift any objects over 10 pounds after surgery. As a reference, a gallon of milk weighs about 8 pounds.
- Do not push or pull heavy objects such as a vacuum cleaner, lawn mower or furniture.
- Do not drive until cleared by your physician.

Driving

- Your Doctor will decide when you can drive again. You will be given specific instructions at your follow up clinic visit.
- You can ride as a passenger in a car at any time.
- Short trips are best at first (wear your seatbelt).
- You may cushion your incision with a towel or small blanket if necessary.

What activities should I do?

Activities

- Use your breathing machine four times a day (ten breaths each time) until you return for your clinic visit.
- Walk every day (find an indoor setting during bad weather).
- You may climb stairs - limit the number of times until you are feeling well.
- Wear your support stockings (TEDS) during the day. You may remove them at night. You may stop wearing those four to six weeks after your operation.
- Elevate your feet as high as possible when sitting (toes higher than nose).
- Continue with the mobility exercises given to you and demonstrated by physical therapy in the hospital.

What steps should I take to monitor my health at home?

- Take your temperature each morning before eating or drinking and at any time you think you may have a fever. Keep a record of your daily temperature.
- Weigh yourself at the same time each morning, after you urinate but before you eat breakfast. Use the same scale every day. Keep a record of your daily weight.
- Check your blood pressure and heart rate in the morning after you have taken your morning medications.
- Monitor your incisions daily for signs of infection (increasing redness, tenderness, swelling, warmth or drainage).

Monitor your health by using the Care Pathway document that is included with this booklet.

MICHIGAN MEDICAL CENTER FRANKEL CARDIOVASCULAR CENTER		Your Care Pathway at Home: Week 1							
		Examples:	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6	Day 7
We Recommend that you:		Date: June 15							
Take your temperature (Temp)	Take your temperature before eating every morning.	Temp: 98.6							
Weigh yourself	Weigh yourself every morning before eating and after going to the bathroom.	Weight: 165							
Take Pulse/Blood Pressure (BP)	Take your pulse and blood pressure daily, or ask the visiting nurse to write it down for you.	BP: 120/70 PULSE: 72							
Exercises	See the "Exercises" chapter in your booklet.								
Incision Care	Shower daily with soap and water. Do not use any creams, lotions or powders on your incisions. NO Tub Baths.								
Elevate your legs	Elevate your legs while sitting.								
Wear Support Hose	Wear daily. Remove at night.								
Walk	Increase time you walk every day. Don't worry about distance. Walking to the bathroom does not count! Walking up and down stairs is encouraged.	Time: 9 minutes Time: 10 minutes Time: 12 minutes							
Use Incentive Spirometer 4 times each day	See the page on Incentive Spirometer in your booklet. Use incentive spirometer during TV commercials.	1: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 2: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 3: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 4: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	1: <input type="checkbox"/> 2: <input type="checkbox"/> 3: <input type="checkbox"/> 4: <input type="checkbox"/>	1: <input type="checkbox"/> 2: <input type="checkbox"/> 3: <input type="checkbox"/> 4: <input type="checkbox"/>	1: <input type="checkbox"/> 2: <input type="checkbox"/> 3: <input type="checkbox"/> 4: <input type="checkbox"/>	1: <input type="checkbox"/> 2: <input type="checkbox"/> 3: <input type="checkbox"/> 4: <input type="checkbox"/>	1: <input type="checkbox"/> 2: <input type="checkbox"/> 3: <input type="checkbox"/> 4: <input type="checkbox"/>	1: <input type="checkbox"/> 2: <input type="checkbox"/> 3: <input type="checkbox"/> 4: <input type="checkbox"/>	
Take Pain medication	Take pain medication as directed by your surgeon for the first few days. Begin to reduce your pain meds after 4 or 5 days as tolerated. (Decrease the number of pills or increase the time between pills.)								
Avoid Constipation	Take stool softener while taking pain medications. Increase activity. Eat more fruits and vegetables.								
Take your medication	Take medication as directed by your surgeon.								

Who do you call? UM Cardiovascular Center Call Center: **888-287-1082** (8a-5pm M-F)
After Hours Paging Number: **734-936-6267** and ask for the Cardiac Surgery Resident on Call

Call your doctor if you have...

- A temperature above 100.5 F
- Weight gain of 5 pounds or more in 3 days
- Weight loss of 7 pounds or more before your clinic visit
- Populations or an irregular heart beat
- Shortness of breath worse than in the hospital
- Bleeding, redness, swelling, increased pain or drainage near your incision
- Incision that opens up after you leave the hospital
- Increased swelling in your legs or ankles
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea

Restrictions:

- No lifting greater than 10 pounds.
- Do not push or pull heavy objects.
- Do not drive.



Everyone recovers from an operation at a different pace.

What do I do if I have concerns?

Call 9-1-1 immediately if you develop:

When do I need to seek emergency care?

- Sudden onset of chest pain
- Shortness of breath not relieved by rest
- If your legs feel numb, tingly, cold or look blue
- You believe you are experiencing a true emergency

Common Signs of Stroke:

- Sudden confusion or trouble speaking or understanding others
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg, usually on one side of your body
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, or loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden or severe headache with no known cause

When do I need to seek medical attention?

Call Cardiac Surgery if you develop any of the following signs and symptoms:

- Under the tongue temperature above 100.5° F
- Bleeding, redness, swelling, increased pain or foul smelling drainage near your incision site
- Incisions that open up after you leave the hospital
- Increased swelling in your legs or ankles
- Weight gain of more than 5 pounds in 3 days or weight loss of 7 pounds or more before your follow up clinic visit
- Increased shortness of breath/difficulty breathing
- Trouble urinating
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Stomach pain or bloating
- Chills or excessive sweating
- A vague feeling that something is wrong

What is the number to call?

Monday through Friday from 8am to 5pm: **Call 888-287-1082**

Ask to speak to the Cardiac Surgery Nurse if you have any of the signs or symptoms above.

After 5pm or on weekends or holidays: **Call 734-936-6267**

Ask to speak with the Cardiac Surgery resident on call.

How do I care for my incisions?

- Shower or sponge bathe every day. Do not soak in a bathtub or get into a swimming pool for the next 4 weeks.
- Allow the water to hit your back and roll over your shoulders.
- Wash your incision with your usual bath soap and water. Pat dry and leave open to air. Use a clean towel each time you shower.
- Do not put any creams, lotions, powders or ointments on your incision until your incision is completely healed.

Useful information after your surgery

Returning to work and everyday activities

At your first clinic appointment following your discharge from the hospital, your surgeon will be able to approximate a date for your return to work. Everyone recovers from an operation at a different pace. Your first priority is to take care of yourself and recover completely.

Household chores

You are encouraged to do light household activities in the four weeks following surgery. These activities include dusting, meal preparation, washing clothes with an automatic washer and dryer (avoid lifting a heavy laundry basket) and washing dishes. Pace yourself and gradually increase the amount of activity as your energy builds.

Sexual activity

It is normal for both partners to be worried about resuming sexual activity after heart surgery. Most people worry about sexual intercourse because they are afraid it may cause discomfort and/or strain on the heart. The exertion needed to perform sexual intercourse is similar to climbing stairs or walking around the block at a brisk pace. If these activities are not difficult for you, you may resume sexual activities whenever you feel ready. Your best indicator is how you feel—both physically and mentally. Some medications may interfere with sexual functioning. If you have any problems, discuss them with your surgeon or nurse.

Some general guidelines to help you resume sexual relations include:

- For the first eight weeks, avoid positions that cause pressure on your breastbone or tension in your arms and chest.
- Pick a time when you are content, relaxed, and happy.
- Wait two hours after eating a full meal or drinking alcohol.
- Remember that it is normal for your breathing and heart rate to increase during sex and that these should return to normal shortly afterward. If you experience shortness of breath, chest pain and/or palpitations, stop, and rest.
- Let your doctor know if you experience any abnormal symptoms.

Precautions for heart valve surgery patients

If you have an artificial (prosthetic) heart valve replacement, repair or prosthetic graft material, you must be protected from infection for the rest of your life. **You need to take an antibiotic prior to any medical or dental procedure.** This includes dental work, all operations, obstetrical/gynecological and urological procedures. Do not have any dental work for at least 6 months after surgery unless it is an emergency.

You should contact your physician **one week** before any medical or dental procedures to obtain the appropriate antibiotic prescription. If you have any known allergies to medications, inform your physician when you call.

Report any signs or symptoms of infection to your physician immediately. Do not wait for these symptoms to disappear. You can have an infection even if you are taking an antibiotic.

The signs and symptoms of infection include: temperature is 100.5° F or greater, chills, night sweats, joint aches, redness, warmth or drainage containing pus from a wound. If an infection is present, your doctor will likely prescribe antibiotics and/or hospitalization.

What can I expect when I get home?

- Difficulty sleeping
- Lack of appetite
- Post-operative constipation
- Feelings of depression or mood changes

Difficulty Sleeping


Many people complain of having trouble sleeping for some time after heart surgery. You may experience insomnia (an inability to sleep) because of:

- The effects of anesthesia
- Discomfort related to healing
- Changes in your daily routine
- Stress from personal concerns

You should return to normal sleeping patterns within 2-3 weeks.

Try these tips to help you sleep:

- Make sure you take enough rest breaks in between your normal daily activities, but avoid a nap longer than 15 to 20 minutes during the day.
- If you have pain, take your pain medication about 30 minutes before bedtime.
- Arrange the pillows so you can maintain a comfortable position and decrease muscle strain.
- If you feel anxious or nervous, talk to your spouse, partner, or a trusted friend. Get your troubles off your mind.
- Avoid caffeine in the evenings (such as chocolate, coffee, tea, and colas).
- Listen to relaxing music or a guided imagery audio program.
- Ask your partner to give you a back rub.
- Take a relaxing shower.
- Follow a bedtime routine. Follow the same rituals to let your body know it is time to relax and get to sleep.
- It is okay to sleep on your back, side, or stomach. You will not hurt your incisions.



You should return to
normal sleeping patterns
within 2-3 weeks.

Night Sweats:

- Patients often complain of night sweats for the first few weeks.
- Should you experience this, check your temperature to make sure you do not have a fever. If your temperature is 100.5° F or greater, call your doctor.

Disturbed Sleep

- Following surgery, some patients experience disturbing dreams or insomnia. This will also disappear with time.
- To help you sleep better, try shortening your naps during the day and/or increasing your afternoon activities so that you will feel tired in the evenings.
- It is OK to sleep on your back, side or stomach. You will not hurt your incisions.

Call your doctor if:

- You are feeling sad, hopeless, fatigued, irritable or lonely most days following your surgery. These could be signs of depression.
- A lack of sleep is causing problems for you such as an inability to participate in your recovery or an inability to stay awake during the day.
- Normal sleep patterns have not returned within 2-3 weeks after surgery.



Lack of appetite

You may notice after surgery you have lost your appetite for food or just feel too tired to eat. This is very common so be patient. Your appetite will soon be back to normal.

Proper Nutrition

We suggest you try eating frequent, small meals throughout the day. You do need proper nutrition to enable your body to heal and get stronger. You should follow a diet low in fat, cholesterol and sodium that includes protein-rich foods.

Good sources of protein include fish, eggs, dairy, beans, and nuts. Please limit the total amount of salt in your diet to 2,000 mg a day. Foods known to be high in salt include restaurant food, soups, pizza, bacon, and other processed meats.

Post-operative constipation

Constipation is a common side affect after your operation. Several factors may contribute to constipation after surgery. These include: decreased activity, pain medication, or changes to your diet. Increasing your activity and eating more fresh fruit, vegetable and high fiber foods may help you. You should continue to take a stool softener such as Colace® while taking pain medication. A fiber laxative such as Psyllium (Metamucil®) may also be helpful. Start walking around as soon as you can and increase the distance.

The Emotional Aspects of Recovery



Feelings of depression or mood changes

Recovering from open heart surgery also involves your emotional healing. The recovery process uses emotional and physical energy. If you feel upset or emotional in the days and weeks after your operation, don't worry - this is a perfectly normal reaction which many patients experience. Many patients report these feelings up to three months after their operation.

It is common for people who have had surgery to:

- Experience mood swings
- Feel depressed or gloomy
- Cry easily for no apparent reason
- Feel afraid, nervous or anxious
- Feel helpless
- Feel lonely
- Lack energy or motivation
- Get easily frustrated
- Be irritable or angry
- Not be able to concentrate
- Have good days and bad days
- Feel more emotional or sentimental than normal



If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else, be sure to call the CVC Social Worker at **(734) 232-1559.**

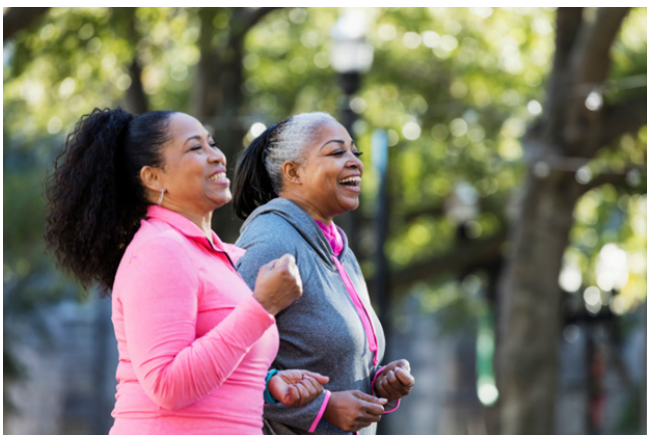
How do I handle my emotions after I get home?



Once you are home, even though you may feel drained physically and emotionally, it is important you follow guidelines for good self-care.

Here are some things you can do to help yourself recover:

- ☐ Get dressed every day.
- ☐ Walk daily within your limits.
- ☐ Get plenty of rest.
- ☐ Resume hobbies and social activities you enjoy.
- ☐ Visit with others.
- ☐ Ensure you have a support system in place that can help with your physical and emotional needs. Discussing your fears, frustrations, pain, concerns and successes with someone is an important part of the healing process.
- ☐ Join a support group.



As you resume your normal activities, you will notice gradual improvement in your mood and outlook.

How do I know when to seek help?

If you find yourself still feeling unmotivated, unusually fatigued, weepy, angry, hopeless, or sad after 3 weeks, or if you have thoughts of hurting yourself or someone else, be sure to call the CVC Social Worker at 734-232-1559 or your Primary Care Doctor and make an appointment to talk about how you are feeling.



Your family and friends need to balance their own feelings while trying to support your recovery.

Emotional Impact on Family and Friends

Heart surgery is stressful for all people involved, not just the patient. They have the extra responsibilities of the caring role, as well as juggling the home and work life. Sometimes, patient needs are greater than anticipated and can lead to stress.

Your family and friends need to balance their own feelings while trying to support your recovery. It is important for your family and friends to take care of themselves physically and emotionally.

Strategies for Family and Friends

If you're a family member or friend, here are some tips:

- Don't neglect your own needs. Eat well, stay active and get plenty of rest.
- Be patient– it is not unusual for your loved one to have good and bad days.
- Share your feelings with a close friend.
- Ask for help if you feel overwhelmed. Be specific about your needs such as meals, chores, pet-sitting, time alone, etc.
- Talk to your family doctor if you have feelings that are concerning.
- Do something you enjoy and find relaxing.

Notes