

Wearing a Bra After Heart Surgery

Why should I wear a bra after heart surgery?

Women are more likely than men to develop infections after heart surgery. The weight of your breasts can pull on your chest incision. As your breasts move, particularly while you are sleeping, they can put strain on your incision. This strain may slow or worsen your healing. It could also cause your incision to open and become infected because bacteria, yeast, and fungi thrive in the skin folds under the breast.

What kind of bra should I wear?

While in the hospital, you will be provided with two bras that fasten at the front with a zipper and adjustable shoulder support straps. Front-close bras prevent reaching behind to clasp the bra. Reaching can put pressure and cause pulling on the wires used to close your breastbone. You will be measured for your bra at your preoperative history and physical examination.

What are the benefits of wearing a bra?

The benefits of wearing a bra include:

- Provides breast support to prevent pulling and strain on your chest incision
- Reduces risk for infection
- Increases comfort
- Easy access for the surgical team to look at your incision
- Easy to put on and take off

When do I start wearing my bra?

After your chest tubes are removed, your nurse will help you put your bra on and adjust the shoulder straps for a good fit.

- When you put the bra on, it should not be restrictive. The support should come from all sides, but not push your breasts together.
- It should also not rub along your incision. If you notice any rubbing from the bra at the bottom of your incision or the chest tube sites, apply a folded piece of gauze to provide some extra padding.
- If you notice any pain at your incisions while wearing the bra, notify your nurse. You may need an adjustment to the straps or a change in bra size.
- You do not need a dressing on your sternal incision or chest tube sites unless there is drainage or discomfort.

How long should I wear my bra?

You should wear your surgical support bra all day, every day (24 hours) until you are evaluated at your postoperative visit. You can remove it for bathing and when replacing with a freshly laundered support bra. You should change your support bra **every other** day.

How do I care for my bra?

Hand wash 1 of your surgical support bras every day. Allow your bra to air dry.

How do I monitor my incision at home?

It is important to keep your incision clean and dry to prevent a yeast or fungal infection. If you have excessive moisture between your breasts, you may need to place a dry gauze pad in between your breast or under your breast folds to absorb the moisture. Change the gauze several times a day to keep the breast tissue dry.

When should I call for help?

Please call us if you notice any redness or irritation:

- Under your breast tissue
- At your chest tube sites

- At your surgical incision

What is the number?

Monday–Friday 8am-5pm: call the Frankel Cardiovascular Call Center at **(888) 287-1082** and press option 3 to ask to speak to a Cardiac Surgery Clinical Nurse.

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