

After Open Heart Surgery: Quick Reference

Royal Columbian Hospital

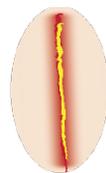
About your follow up appointments

- Make sure you have a good understanding of your follow up appointments before leaving the hospital.
- Once at home, please telephone to arrange your appointments.



Incision Care

- Gently wash around your incisions with mild soap and water.
- **Do not** take a bath for 6 weeks. You can shower at home, as normal. When you shower, do not let the water spray directly onto your incisions.
- Itchiness is a normal part of healing. Do not scratch, rub or use lotions or powders on your incisions until the skin has completely healed.
- Check your incisions for signs of infection. **Call your family doctor if you have any of the following:**
 - thick yellow or green drainage
 - a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F)
 - redness, swelling, or warmth around incisions
 - new pain or pain that does not ease with pain medicine



Keep Your Move in the Tube™

This way to move helps you protect your breastbone (sternum) while it heals.

It helps you move safely as you build up strength and recover from heart surgery.

Remember to imagine that your upper body is inside a big tube that guides your movement.

Focus on keeping your upper arms close to your body while you move. This prevents added stress on your breastbone and helps you heal properly.

You'll know when it is safe to move more by paying attention to how you feel and how much pain you have. As you heal, you'll be able to move more easily. Let pain be your guide.

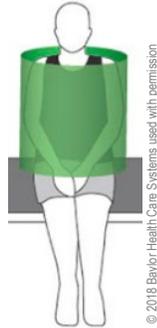
Activity

To help you recover:

- rest and relax
- gradually increase activity and exercise

These activities are safe for you to do:

- Take a bus or cab.
- Attend a cardiac rehabilitation program.
- Resume sexual activity as long as you keep your move in the tube.
- Fly in an airplane.



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Diet

- Eat a variety of healthy foods that are low in sodium.
- Choose a good balance of protein, grains, vegetables, and fruits.
- If you have diabetes, continue following your diabetic diet.



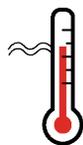
Medications

- Fill your prescriptions on the day you leave the hospital.
- Check with your pharmacist about any changes in how much you take or what medicines you take. You might still be able to use your previous supply.
- Check with your pharmacist or doctor before taking any medicines not prescribed by your doctor such as herbal medicines or medicines you buy without a prescription.
- If your doctor prescribes blood thinners for you, do not stop taking them unless a doctor or nurse practitioner instructs you to stop, and tell your heart specialist.
- Continue to take regular or extra-strength acetaminophen (Tylenol®) for pain as needed for the next 1 to 2 weeks after surgery.



After Valve Surgery

- Check your temperature regularly. Let your doctor know if you get a fever.
- Tell dentists and doctors you had a valve operation and if you are taking blood thinners.



When to get help

Call 9-1-1 if you have any of these warning signs:



- pain similar to heart attack or angina pain
- shortness of breath that does not go away with rest
- signs of stroke such as
 - sudden numbness or weakness of face, arm or leg especially on one side
 - sudden confusion and trouble speaking, seeing, understanding and walking
 - severe headache and dizziness with no known cause

Signs of a Stroke	
Face	Is it drooping?
Arms	Can you raise both arms?
Speech	Is it slurred or jumbled?
Time	Call 9-1-1 right away.

Resources

- **Your Heart Surgery Journey – Recovery at Home** booklet
- **Fraser Health Virtual Care**
fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare **1-800-314-0999**
Connect with a health professional from 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., daily
- **HealthLinkBC**
healthlinkbc.ca **8-1-1**
Speak to a registered nurse any time, day or night, from anywhere in B.C.
Available in 130 languages. For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.
- **Pacific Open Heart Association**
pacifiopenheart.org 604-436-9005
- **Heart and Stroke Foundation (BC/Yukon)**
heartandstroke.bc.ca 604-736-4404

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www.fraserhealth.ca

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.