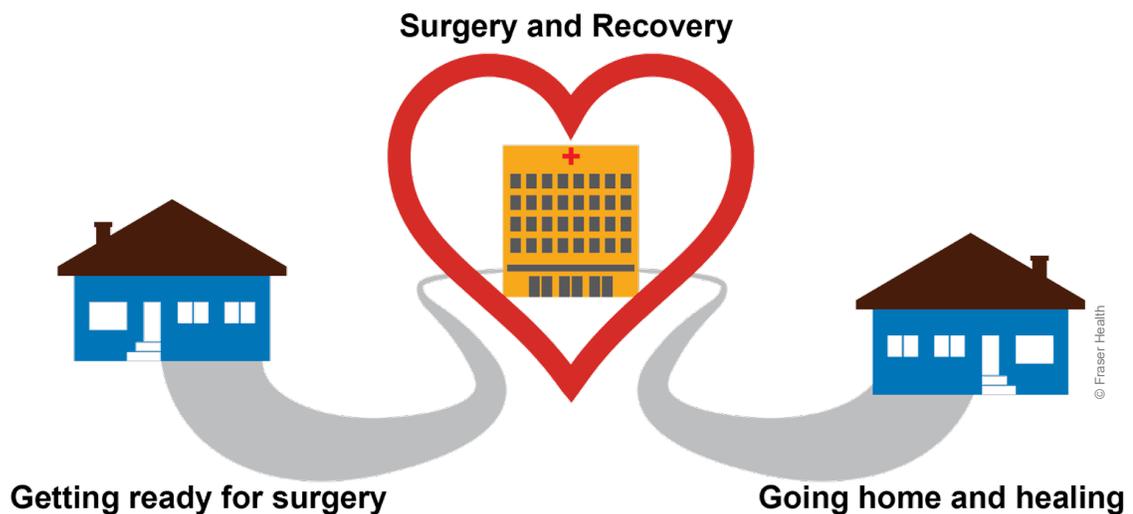


# Your Heart Surgery Journey

## Preparing for Surgery

Royal Columbian Hospital



***Be involved in your journey...***

Use this booklet to help you:

- ✓ Maintain or improve your ability move and do everyday activities
- ✓ Set goals
- ✓ Keep track of your questions
- ✓ Plan ahead for your recovery after surgery
- ✓ Find community supports and programs that will help you

## Contents

Your Heart Surgery Journey Preparing for Surgery.....	1
Your Heart Surgery Journey.....	1
Taking Care of Your Breastbone (Sternal Precautions).....	2
Getting In Bed .....	3
Getting Out of Bed.....	3
Breathing Exercises.....	5
Healthy Eating .....	6
Preventing Infection.....	8
My Plan .....	9
Cardiac Rehabilitation .....	10
Community Supports and Programs.....	11
My Notes and Questions .....	12

If you have any questions about your heart surgery journey,

- ♥ Write them down
- ♥ Bring them with you to your doctor or clinic visit.



It might be helpful to bring a friend or family member with you because it is sometimes difficult to remember everything.

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We have included online resources in this booklet.

Along with web addresses, we have included QR codes. A QR code (short for 'quick response' code) is a type of barcode that you scan with your smart device's camera. Once scanned, it takes you to that web page.

## Your Heart Surgery Journey

You are going to have heart surgery. We break this timeframe into 3 phases: before surgery, recovery in the hospital, and when you get home. When you take an active part in your care, you can speed your return to normal activity.

### Before surgery

- ♥ Studies have shown that doing things to improve your health before surgery can have a good effect on recovery.
- ♥ This booklet outlines activities and tasks you can do to help prepare.
- ♥ We call this time 'prehabilitation' or 'prehab', meaning to start rehabilitating before the surgery.

### Recovery in hospital

- ♥ For information on the surgery you have been scheduled for, go to [fraserhealth.ca/heart](https://fraserhealth.ca/heart).  
Select 'Heart Surgery and Procedures'.

QR Code



### When you get home

- ♥ There are many Cardiac Rehabilitation programs in the Lower Mainland (see Page 11). Plan to go to the program closest to you.
- ♥ For what to expect when you get home, try these videos from Alberta Health Services:
  - *Bypass Surgery for Heart Disease*
  - *Heart Valve Replacement Therapy*
  - *Open-Heart Surgery: Returning Home*
  - *Cardiac Rehab: How it can help*
  - *Diabetes and Your Heart*



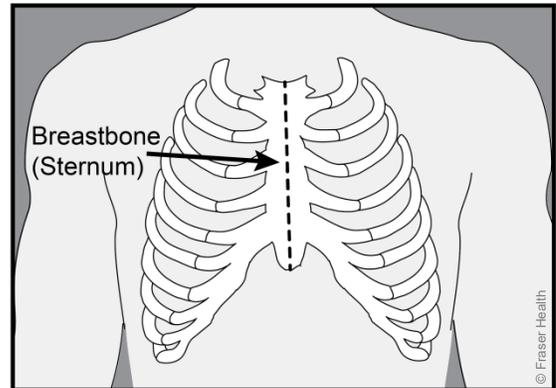
Go to [myhealth.alberta.ca](https://myhealth.alberta.ca). Select the tab at the top of the web page 'MyHealth videos', then 'Heart and Blood Vessels'.

## Taking Care of Your Breastbone (Sternal Precautions)

Most heart surgery is done by cutting through a person's breastbone (sternum).

It is important to practice 'sternal precautions' before surgery so you are familiar and comfortable with them after surgery.

'Sternal precautions' help make sure that there is no straining or separating of the sternum while the bone is healing.



Breastbone cut along the dotted line

### **Sternal Precautions**

- ♥ **Do** log roll onto your side to get in and out of bed.
- ♥ **Do** support your chest when you cough or sneeze by wrapping your arms across your chest and hugging yourself.
- ♥ **Do not** lie on your stomach.
- ♥ **Do not** swing your arms vigorously.
- ♥ **Do not** strain or bear down during a bowel movement.

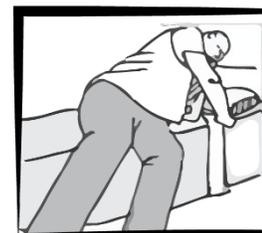
## Getting In Bed

1. Sit on the edge of the bed and cross your arms loosely over your chest.

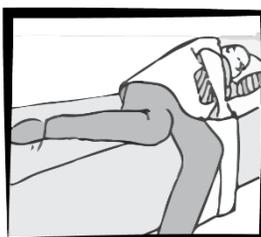


2. Lean sideways.

**Gently** support yourself with your hands until you are lying on your side.



3. Lift your legs onto the bed one after the other.



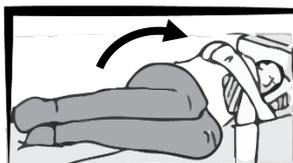
4. If done correctly, you should now be lying on your side.



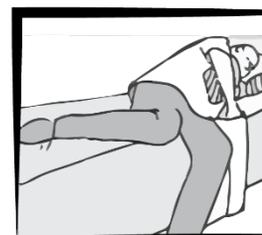
It is okay to lie on your back, but not your stomach.

## Getting Out of Bed

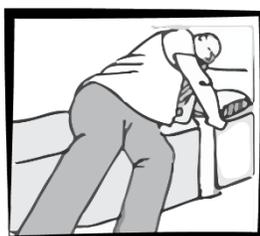
1. Log roll onto your side with your arms in front and your knees bent.



2. Drop your legs over the side of the bed.



3. **Gently** push sideways with the elbow nearest the bed while you push on the bed with your other arm.



4. Take a moment to rest at the side of the bed before standing.



Use your trunk muscles to help you sit up.

It will take several weeks for your breastbone (sternum) to heal. During your recovery, it is important to follow sternal precautions both in the hospital and at home.

While you are healing, it will be harder to do everyday activities such as getting out of bed, getting dressed, and making meals.

Consider the questions below. Are there areas where you might need added help during your recovery? What resources might you need?

	Yes	No
Do you feel emotionally prepared for the surgery and/or recovery period?		
If you are currently working, do you have the finances to support yourself during the recovery period?		
Do you have someone who can stay with you for the first few days after you get home?		
Do you have someone to help you with errands or daily tasks? Examples: grocery shopping, getting to and from appointments, household chores (such as laundry, vacuuming)		
Are you able to easily get up from low surfaces, such as off a toilet, couch, chair, or bed?		
Do you have clothing that is loose fitting and easy to put on and take off so you don't strain your breastbone?		

## Breathing Exercises

During your Preadmission Clinic visit, a physiotherapist shows you how to do different breathing exercises: deep breathing, coughing, and breathing using a tool called an incentive spirometer. Practice these exercises at home.

These exercises will help your lungs remain at their best possible function while you wait for surgery. Breathing exercises help to lessen the chances of problems after surgery. While in the hospital, it is important for you to do these exercises several times each day.

**If you smoke...** the best thing you can do is stop smoking as soon as possible. The longer you go without smoking, the greater the benefits to your health.



Quitting smoking will help you:

- ✓ heal faster
- ✓ have fewer complications
- ✓ lower the risk of infection
- ✓ reduce the stress on your heart
- ✓ speed up bone healing time
- ✓ improve blood flow to your heart and body

Aim to quit a full month before surgery. However, quitting just a few days before surgery still has benefit. For those who want to quit smoking, there are many free services (see page 11).

You won't be able to smoke while in the hospital. We can offer nicotine replacement therapy to keep you comfortable (such as nicotine patches and lozenges).

Fraser Health has a Smoking-free Policy

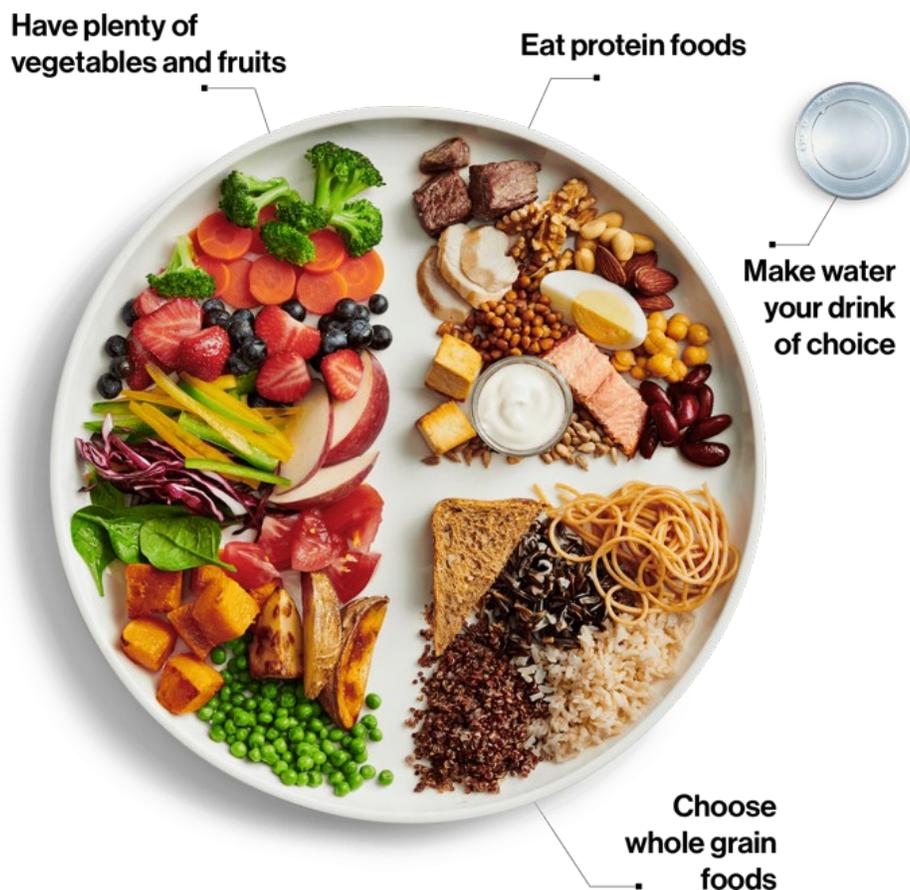
This means the smoking of tobacco, cannabis, and e-cigarettes is not allowed in any of our buildings or the surrounding property.

## Healthy Eating

Eat a variety of healthy foods each day. Eating balanced meals is important for recovery. It supports your immune system, helping you heal and fight off infection.

Start by having 3 meals a day or 5 smaller meals a day.

Follow Canada's Food Guide ([food-guide.canada.ca](http://food-guide.canada.ca)) for healthy food choices and portion sizes.



From Canada's Food Guide snapshot and available at [food-guide.canada.ca/en/food-guide-snapshot/](http://food-guide.canada.ca/en/food-guide-snapshot/)

When you eat enough calories and protein, it will help increase your strength and repair your wounds.

High protein foods:

Animal Sources	Plant Sources
Lean meats, poultry, fish, seafood, eggs, cheese, yogurt, milk, kefir	Beans, lentils, peas, tofu, soy and soy milk, nuts and nut butters, seeds, nutritional yeast

- ♥ Plant sources of protein contain healthy fats that do not increase your cholesterol levels.
- ♥ Saturated fats can increase the cholesterol in your blood. They are found mainly in fatty meats, high fat dairy products, butter, shortening, tropical oils (coconut, palm, and cocoa butter), deep fried foods, fast food, packaged snack foods, and commercial baked goods.
- ♥ Use these strategies to limit saturated fats when eating protein foods for wound healing:
  - Choose lean meats. Avoid processed meats like bacon, ham, sausage, and deli meats.
  - Trim any visible fat and remove the skin from chicken, turkey, and other poultry.
  - Be mindful of cooking methods.  
Choose these methods: grill, roast, bake, poach, boil, broil, steam, stir fry, pressure cook, slow cook, stew  
Avoid these methods: baste, braise, deep fry, pan fry, creamed
  - Include plant-based protein sources daily.
  - Choose milk and yogurt with 2% milk fat or less.
  - Choose lower fat cheese or enjoy small portions of regular cheese.
  - Watch your portion sizes.

## Preventing Infection

Cleaning your hands, brushing your teeth, and showering regularly help to remove germs that can cause infections.

Cleaning your hands is the most important thing you can do to reduce the spread of germs.

At home, wash your hands with soap and water before eating or drinking, and after visiting a bathroom.

In the hospital:

- Clean your hands using hand sanitizer (alcohol-based hand rub):
  - before eating or drinking
  - before you leave your room
  - after sneezing, coughing or blowing your nose
- Clean your hands with soap and water after using the toilet and any time they are visible dirty.

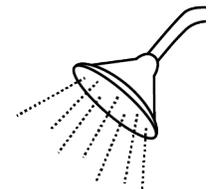


Clean your mouth and teeth at least 2 times every day (example: every morning and evening).

\*Remember to bring a toothbrush and toothpaste with you when you come to the hospital. Bring denture cleaner if you wear dentures.



Follow the instructions given to you to clean your body the night before and the morning of your surgery using a Chlorhexidine Gluconate solution.



Ask your nurse when you can shower after surgery.

After every shower, put on clean clothes or clean hospital pajamas.

## My Plan

**Keep active.** Activity and exercise help strengthen your muscles and improves blood flow.

Schedule time for activity and rest. Your doctor can advise you as to how much activity is safe. Try to take short walks around your neighbourhood every day. If this is not possible, do small things like walk around in your home. This will help you keep your strength up.

Today I ...	
1. Practiced protecting my chest by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Log rolling in and out of bed</li> <li>✓ Hugging a pillow when getting out of a chair/standing up, and when coughing</li> </ul>	
2. Maintained my strength and mobility by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Going for a walk</li> </ul>	
3. Kept healthy and prevented infection by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Washing my hands after using the toilet and before meals</li> <li>✓ Brushing my teeth in the morning and evening</li> <li>✓ Showering</li> </ul>	
4. Practiced my deep breathing exercises.	
5. Tracked the food I ate to make sure I am eating enough protein, vegetables, and fruit.	

Keeping track of daily nutrition and activity has been shown to improve success. Activity trackers and apps are widely available. If you prefer, you can use a notebook or diary instead.

## Cardiac Rehabilitation

Cardiac rehabilitation is a medically supervised program offered in the community. The focus is to help improve the health and well-being of people who have heart problems.

Cardiac rehabilitation programs include:

- Exercise training
- Education on heart healthy living
- Counseling to reduce stress and help you return to an active life

People with heart problems who take part in a cardiac rehabilitation program after heart surgery usually do better than those who don't.

Benefits of taking part in cardiac rehabilitation include:

- ✓ more energy
- ✓ less anxiety
- ✓ improved quality of life
- ✓ lowered risk of future heart problems

Before your surgery, you might want to explore what is offered in your community.

Before you go home from the hospital, your nurse can help you to register for a cardiac rehabilitation program near your home.

## Community Supports and Programs

### Offered by Fraser Health

#### Cardiac Rehabilitation and Prevention Programs

Abbotsford Regional Hospital and  
Cancer Centre  
32900 Marshall Road  
604-851-4700 ext. 642631

Jim Pattison Outpatient Care and  
Surgery Centre  
9750 140<sup>th</sup> Street  
604-582-4550 ext. 763859

Peach Arch Hospital  
15521 Russell Avenue  
604-535-4500 ext. 7676

#### Healthy Heart Program

Burnaby Hospital  
3935 Kinkaid Street  
604-412-6440

### Offered by the YMCA

Healthy Heart Program Office  
604-521-5801  
healthy.heart@gv.ymca.ca

### Offered by The Lung Association



[www.quitnow.ca](http://www.quitnow.ca)

Free quit smoking program you can do on your own. Lots of helpful tools and resources.



**Call 1-877-455-2233**

A friendly, professional helpline. Talk to a Quit Coach (or their assistant) anytime, day or night.



**Text 'QUITNOW' to 654321**

Get supportive messages anytime, anywhere.







[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

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

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To order: [patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca](http://patienteduc.fraserhealth.ca)

