

Cardiac Surgery Post-Operative Instructions

1. **No driving.** Your sternum hasn't healed yet. You will be assessed at your post-op visit with the surgeon and it will be determined if you can drive then. When riding in the car, make sure to sit in the back seat to protect from airbags.
2. **Shower daily.** It is very important to wash your incisions daily with a separate face cloth using anti-bacterial soap. Make sure to let the water irrigate your incisions thoroughly.
3. **Do not cover your incisions unless they are draining or open wounds.** They heal best if left open to the air.
4. **Do not apply Bacitracin, Neosporin or other anti-bacterial ointments.** These seal the wound and don't allow them to breath and heal well.
5. **You will have lower extremity swelling, especially in the calves, ankles and feet.** Wear the Ted stockings during the day and off at night. These are to help prevent blood clots in the legs. If your legs are so swollen the stockings are cutting off circulation, it is better to not wear them. Elevate both legs with in bed or sitting for long periods of time on 2-3 pillows (or ideally above the heart) to decrease swelling.
6. **You will be given pain medication to alleviate the muscle soreness in the neck shoulder and back.** You will also experience pain from the chest, arm and leg incisions. Being properly medicated for pain promotes healing and deep breathing.
7. **The incentive spirometer must be done every hour 10 repetitions each time.** This will keep your lungs clear after surgery.
8. **Keep track of your weights daily.** Increase in fluid weight can be a sign of Congestive Heart Failure. Take your morning weight prior to eating or drinking for the most accurate weight. If you are gaining 1-3 lbs. daily consistently in the first 2 weeks, call your surgeon.
9. **Following a NO-ADDED SALT diet is very important.** Salt retains water and will increase fluid weight gain and can contribute to Congestive Heart Failure. A heart healthy diet consists of: fish, chicken, lean meats, fresh fruits and vegetables, high fiber and foods cooked in olive oil and other oils low in saturated fats. No fried food, canned soups, Chinese food, frozen entrees, or frozen vegetables. These are extremely high in sodium.

10. **Check your temperature in the morning and at night.** If you spike a temperature of 101.5 degrees call our office. This may indicate an infection.
11. **You are responsible for scheduling your post-op appointments after being discharged.** You need to follow-up with your cardiac surgeon 4 weeks post-operatively and your cardiologist 2 weeks post-operatively. You should also follow-up with your primary care doctor approximately 1 week after surgery.