

Getting Ready to Go Home After Cardiac Surgery



UHN

The staff at University Health Network would like to make your move from hospital to home after cardiac surgery as smooth as possible. Planning for leaving hospital begins before you ever have surgery. This is important. The following information will help you prepare for your recovery at home after you leave hospital.

Time of Discharge (leaving the hospital)

You can expect to be in hospital 5 to 6 days. On the day you go home (we call this discharge) you will leave the hospital at 11 a.m. This time helps us make sure that you are prepared for discharge. It also frees up the room for new patients. Hospital staff will tell you the day before that you are probably going to be discharged the next day. This will give you time to arrange a ride home. If you can't leave by 11 a.m., we may ask you to wait in the patient lounge until your family or friends come to take you home.

What You Can Do At Home

After surgery you will be tired and weak. Your breastbone will be healing and you will not be able to do your usual activities when you return home.

- Do not lift anything heavier than 10 lbs for 6 weeks after you return home.

While most patients do not need to have someone at home with them, there should be someone you can call for help if you need it. It is important that you plan to have a family member or a friend help you with these activities:

- Grocery shopping. Plan to have a good supply of food and meals in your refrigerator. If you need to restrict salt, do not buy salty foods.
- Laundry
- Vacuuming and other heavy cleaning
- Transportation to medical appointments or for lab tests. You will not be able to drive for several weeks after surgery. If you are on blood thinners (warfarin or Coumadin after surgery) you will need blood tests twice a week for at least 2 weeks.

This information is to be used for informational purposes only and is not intended as a substitute for professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment. Please consult your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. A single copy of these materials may be reprinted for non-commercial personal use only.

© 2009 University Health Network. All rights reserved.

Author: Cardiovascular Surgery Team

Created: 09/2004

Form: D-5014 (Reviewed 01/2009)



You will need help with these household tasks for about the first 6 weeks after surgery. If you have no one to help you, one of our social workers will give you information about community agencies that provide these services. These agencies do charge a fee.

What Resources are Available?

Rehabilitation Hospitals:

Most people recover well at home and do not need to go to a rehabilitation hospital. However, patients often ask to go to a rehabilitation hospital after surgery. This is possible only if you:

- are elderly and live alone with no family or friends for support
- have had major complications that need ongoing medical care

Since so few patients qualify for rehabilitation beds, it is important that you prepare for your discharge before your surgery.

Some retirement homes offer a convalescent (recovery) stay for a fee.

One of our social workers can help you find the right resources.

Local Hospitals:

Patients from out of town sometimes ask to go back to their local hospital after being discharged from this hospital. This is usually not necessary. You can expect to recover well at home. Therefore, you should prepare to be discharged home from our hospital. Only patients with ongoing medical needs are transferred back to their local hospital. These patients must have a doctor who can take care of them in their local hospital.

Home Care/CCAC (Community Care Access Centre):

Most patients do not need home care when they return home. When you are in hospital, we will teach you how to take care of yourself during your recovery at home, and what to do if you have questions or problems.

Home care is provided to those who need specific professional services, such as nursing services for dressings or intravenous antibiotics. If you need care at home we will arrange this.

Please note: a hospital Community Care Coordinator assesses each patient referred to the CCAC. The CCAC does not provide homemaking services (cleaning and meal preparation). If you wish to pay for these services, one of our social workers can help you find them.