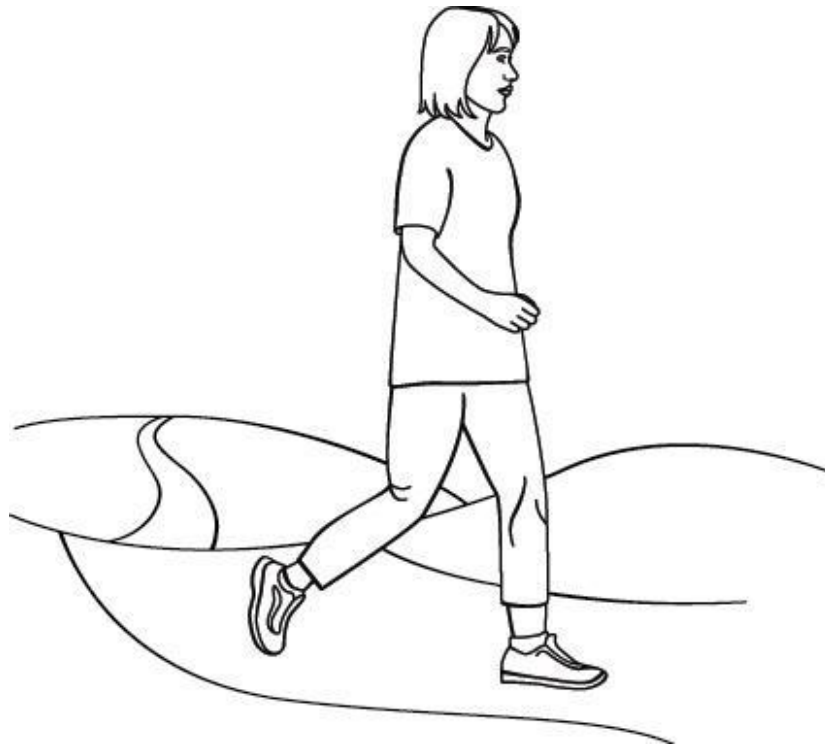


Cardiac Surgery Discharge Information



TGH

Homeward Bound



Patient Education
Improving Health Through Education

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Introduction

Now that your heart surgery is over, you and your family can focus on your recovery.

Like any major surgery, heart surgery places stress on your entire body. Naturally you are going to feel more tired than usual and be unsure about what you can do and when you can do it.

At first your recovery may seem slow. Some days will be better than others. Increase your activity level slowly. Listen to your body and use common sense. Your recovery time will depend on your age, your general level of health, your activity level before surgery and your progress after surgery.

This booklet will help you with your progress. It answers the questions most frequently asked by our heart surgery patients and their families. The guidelines for recovery apply to you regardless of the type of heart surgery you have had.



Getting Ready to Go Home

Planning for your discharge home should begin **before** you have surgery!

Before surgery, you should tell your nurse or doctor about your plans for returning home (for example, who will stay with you or be available to help you after you go home).

Time of Discharge

You may be ready for discharge as soon as 4 days after your surgery. 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. However, sometimes there are a number of medical reasons why your discharge home may be delayed. Most discharges are finalized/confirmed the morning of your departure.

On the day you go home, we ask that you arrange to leave the hospital by 11 a.m. This time helps us prepare for new patients coming to us for their cardiac surgery or from the intensive care unit. We thank you for cooperating with this discharge time. 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 Do I Need to Do Before I Go Home?

On the day of discharge from the hospital you will be given:

- A discharge letter for you and a copy for your family doctor.
- Prescriptions for your medications.
- Information about the medications you are taking, including why you need to take them, how to take them, and common side effects
- Your blue hospital card

Before discharge all patients will:

- View the discharge video and read this booklet.
- Attend the information sessions on topics such as guidelines for physical activity, and healthy eating. Look on your room door for the list of classes and times.
- If you live alone, try to arrange for a family member or a friend to be available for the first few days. You will need someone to help with cooking, grocery shopping and cleaning.
- You will need someone to drive you home. Have a family member or friend pick you up **before** 11 AM. If your trip home is long, stop every hour or so to take a short walk.
- If you are flying home, be sure to discuss your plans with the staff. You may need medical clearance to fly and help at the airport.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing. If the weather is cold, be sure your head and neck are covered.
- Take some pain medication before you leave the hospital so that you are comfortable on your way home.
- If you are taking Warfarin (blood thinner), you need to make sure that you have received and understand the information about how your Warfarin will be monitored (INR blood testing)

Before discharge, some patients (valve and congenital heart disease patients) will need:

- A handout for endocarditis prophylaxis



What Follow-Up Appointments Will I Have After Surgery?

Following up with all your doctors is important after surgery. You will need to make the following appointments after discharge:

Scheduled appointments:	
Family Doctor: Or Primacy Care Nurse Practitioner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See your family doctor within the first week that you are at home. • This will let him/her see how you are feeling. It will be important for measuring your progress at future visits. • If you have any problems, your family doctor or nurse practitioner will help or will refer you to your surgeon and/or cardiologist.
Cardiologist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See your cardiologist about 4 weeks after surgery. • Call the first week you are at home to make your appointment. • If you are followed by a cardiologist at the Toronto Centre for Adult Congenital Heart Disease, the clinic will call you with an appointment
Surgeon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See your surgeon about 6-8 weeks after surgery. • Call your surgeon's office in about 6 weeks to make an appointment. The number to call will be on your discharge letter

Reasons to call your family doctor:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever higher than 38°C (100.4°F) for 2-3 days with or without flu-like symptoms. • Thick, yellow-green (pus-like) drainage from any incision or chest tube site. • A weight gain of 2-3 pounds (1-1.5 kg) over 2-3 days and/or swelling of both ankles. This may be a sign that you are retaining fluid. • Increasing shortness of breath after activity or at rest. • A feeling that your heart is beating fast, pounding or skipping a beat more often than it did early after your surgery. • Sharp pain in your chest that becomes worse when you take a deep breath and is not relieved by pain medication. • Fatigue or tiredness over several days that is much worse than you have been experiencing after surgery. • Angina or chest pain/discomfort like you had before surgery.



Resources Commonly Asked About

Rehabilitation

There are two kinds of rehabilitation—in-patient and outpatient. In-patient rehabilitation refers to assistance with recovery involving transfer to another health-care facility. Outpatient rehabilitation is open to all cardiac patients and involves information about physical activity, nutrition and lifestyle.

Most people recover very well at home and do not need to go to a rehabilitation hospital. However, some people need this step in their recovery. This is possible only if you:

- are elderly and live alone with no family or friends to help, or
- have had major complications requiring ongoing medical care.

Because so few patients qualify for rehabilitation beds, it is important that you prepare for your discharge before you come to the hospital for surgery.

There are retirement homes available that offer a convalescent stay for a fee. Please ask to talk to our social worker early during your stay so that they can assist you in finding the help you need.

Local Hospitals

Patients from out of town sometimes ask to go back to their local hospital after being discharged. This is usually not necessary and you should prepare to be discharged home. Only patients with ongoing medical needs that require hospital care are transferred back to their local hospital. These patients must have a family doctor or cardiologist who can take care of them in their local hospital.

Home Care/CCAC (Community Care Access Centre)

Most patients do not need Home Care after discharge. During your hospital stay, you will learn how to take care of yourself during your recovery and what to do if you have questions or problems.

Home care is arranged for patients who need specific medical services, such as nursing services for intravenous antibiotics. If you need care at home we will make the necessary arrangements.

CCAC (Home Care) does not provide homemaking services (cleaning and meal preparation). If you wish to pay for these services, our social worker can give you more information.



How Will I Feel After Surgery?

Recovery from heart surgery is an individual experience. Everyone will recover at their own pace. Your daily routines may be changed for some time.

Physical changes

After heart surgery, patients often experience physical sensations or feelings that decrease as they recover. We have listed common feelings and some ideas about that will help in the table below.

	Common sensations/feelings	Do's & Don'ts
General Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Weakness and fatigue. • Nausea and lack of appetite. • Poor concentration level. 	<p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Listen to your body. Balance your activities • Be patient. Your energy level will improve as your red blood cell level and strength increase. • Talk to staff about how you feel. • Gradually increase activities. <p>Don't:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-exert yourself. Your body will give you signs that you are doing too much.
Heart Beat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster heart beat than usual. • Occasionally pounding or skipping a beat. 	<p>Like you, your heart will go through some changes as it heals.</p> <p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stop and rest if your heart feels as if it is racing and see your family doctor or nurse practitioner. • Follow the Activity Guidelines (p. 13)



	Common sensations/feelings	Do's & Don'ts
Pain/ Discomfort	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discomfort, soreness, and aching in and around your incisions or ribcage, between the shoulder blades, the back of the neck, and the legs. • Stiffness 	<p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take pain medication to ease your discomfort. Your walking and other activities will be easier to do if you feel more comfortable. • Try to keep good posture. • Change positions often (sitting, standing, walking). • Make sure you get enough exercise. <p>Don't:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lie in one position for too long
Incisions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slight redness, swelling, or bruising and discoloration along incision lines. • Swelling or a lump at the top of the chest incision. • Numbness and burning sensations caused by damage to nerves during surgery. • Itching, numbness, and burning in and around incisions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will fade and eventually disappear. The lump will disappear in a few weeks. <p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Watch for signs of infection. • Wash incisions with mild soap and water. • Use a clean, cool cloth on your incision to help relieve itchiness. <p>Don't:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply creams, ointments, lotions or powder to incisions for the first few weeks.
Leg Swelling	<p>For bypass patients: Swelling in the leg, especially the foot and ankle area, where the vein was removed.</p>	<p>This will improve as the other veins in the leg build up to take over for the one that was removed.</p> <p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elevate your legs above hip level when sitting or lie down to help relieve swelling. • Continue your walking program. <p>Don't:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross your legs while sitting. • Stand in one position for long periods of time.



	Common sensations/feelings	Do's & Don'ts
Healing Breastbone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slight clicking or movement of the breastbone (sternum) when you move or take deep breathes. This feeling will disappear in 4 weeks or so as your breastbone heals. 	<p>This feeling will disappear in 4 weeks or so as your breastbone heals.</p> <p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Let someone else do heavy or strenuous activities during the recovery period. <p>Don't:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lift, carry, push or pull anything over 10 pounds (4.5 kg) for 6 weeks after surgery
Sleep	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequent wakening Stiffness Not feeling rested 	<p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make yourself comfortable with pillows Stay active during the day Take rest periods during the day Take pain medication before you go to bed.
Constipation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Abdominal bloating due to pain medications and the effect of the anaesthetic 	<p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eat high fiber foods such as fruit and vegetables Talk to your pharmacist or family doctor if you need a mild laxative
Other Sensations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tingling or numbness in your ring or little fingers (caused by stretching of the nerves in the arm when the chest is opened during surgery) 	<p>These sensations will disappear in time.</p> <p>Do:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move your wrist and fingers normally



Emotional Changes

Major surgery can affect your emotions and your mood. Your feelings show how you are feeling physically or can be related to coping and adjustment to your surgery.

While many people do not have trouble with their emotions after surgery, others find some days more difficult than others. Some people experience depressed feelings. Others find that they cry very easily, often for no reason. Some patients have feelings of irritability, impatience and anger, and may direct these feelings towards family members. Others find that their mood can change from one moment to the next. Some patients report a change in sleep patterns. Other **temporary** changes reported include loss of memory and difficulty concentrating.

The range of feelings and reactions you experience may be troublesome, but they usually fade away by the end of your recovery period and should not interfere with your progress. As your energy level increases and your aches and pains disappear, you will feel better and will resume the activities you did before your surgery.

Try to be patient. Don't expect too much of yourself in the first few weeks. Measure your progress week-by-week and not day-by-day.

Remember that family members may also experience a range of emotions. They too have used a great deal of energy to cope with the fear and anxiety associated with your surgery and recovery. Being open and honest about each other's feelings may help you and your family members deal with the worries and frustration experienced during the recovery period.



What About My Medications?

The medications that you will be taking when you go home will depend upon the type of surgery you had and your medical conditions. Some of the medications you were taking before surgery may be stopped and new medications may be added.

Before you go home, you should know the following about each medication:

- What it is for
- How much to take
- When to take it
- How long to take it
- What side effects to watch for
- What to do if side effects occur

If you are started on Warfarin (Coumadin[®]) while in hospital, please make sure that you or a family member attends the Warfarin education class before being discharged from hospital.

Unless you are told otherwise, you will be taking your medications until your first check-up with your family doctor and/or cardiologist. At this appointment, your family doctor/cardiologist will tell you which medications you will continue to take.

Important Medication Tips:

- Take your medications as directed by your health care provider.
- Keep an up-to-date list of your medications (including the medication name, dose, and time of day taken) with you at all times. Or, bring all of your medications in their original containers (labelled with the medication name, dose and time of day taken) to all medical appointments.
- Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before taking new prescription medications, non-prescription medications, herbal or vitamin products.
- If you forget to take your medication, do not make up for it the next time by taking two. Just skip the dose and take your medication at the next scheduled time.



- Return old or out-dated medications to your pharmacy for safe disposal.
- Report any rash, fever, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, yellowing of the skin or severe bruising to your doctor, as these may be side effects of a medication you are taking.

How Should I Care for My Incisions?

Take a shower every day and wash your incisions gently with water and non-scented soap. Don't scrub. Let the water run over your incisions to rinse off the soap. If your chest is sensitive to the shower spray, turn your back to the showerhead. Then move around so that the water runs over your shoulders onto your chest. If you find it too tiring to stand in the shower, sit on a sturdy stool or chair that is meant for the shower.

Avoid direct sunlight on your healing incision (and later the scar). After your incision is well healed in 4 – 6 weeks you can use sunscreen to protect the scar tissue.

Women should wear a good support bra because it helps prevent pulling on the incision and helps lessen discomfort. If your bra irritates your incision, put some gauze over the affected area.



What Activities or Exercises Will Help Me Get Better When I Get Home?

When you get home from the hospital, you should follow the same routine as you did in the hospital. **Be sure to listen to your body and balance your activities.** Your daily activities should include:

Deep breathing and coughing exercises	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helps lungs return to normal, especially during the first few weeks. • See Appendix B
Stretching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To help you feel less stiff and regain flexibility. • See Appendix B
Walking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow guidelines on the page 18.
Doing your own self-care activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For example, washing and dressing.

Suggestions To Save Energy During Daily Activities

Finding an easier way to do your activities will help you avoid becoming over-tired during your early recovery period. Saving energy does not mean doing less, it means using the energy you have wisely. A few ideas include:

Balance activity with rest periods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short frequent periods of activity alternated with short rest periods will benefit you the most and allow for recovery. The key is to rest BEFORE you feel tired. We suggest that you have at least two rest periods of 30-60 minutes each day in your early recovery period. • Take a nap or simply rest as you need to.
Take your time during activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rushing takes more energy and increases your stress level. You will use less energy working at a slow steady pace.
Position your body to save energy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body position has an effect on the amount of work your heart has to do. You can save energy if you sit to do activities such as meal preparation or bathing. Change your position frequently (for example, don't sit or stand for too long) to help prevent stiffness and promote circulation.



Adjusting your activity while you recover from heart surgery

Now that you have returned home, you have to temporarily limit your activities. You must not overtire yourself or strain your healing sternum (chest bone). Below is a guideline for what activities you can and cannot do. Remember to watch how you are feeling. For example, pain is one of your body's signals that something may be wrong.

Before starting any of the activities below, ask your doctor what activities you should and should not be doing.

Light Activities in the first 4-6 weeks after your surgery:

- Walking and climbing stairs at a slow pace
- Lifting items that weigh less than 10 pounds (lbs)
- Washing your hands and body, or combing your hair while sitting or standing at the sink
- Showering with warm water while sitting or standing in the shower
- Dressing and undressing
- Preparing light meals (example: chopping salad while sitting)
- Washing dishes, making the bed and doing light housekeeping such as dusting

Remember: Do not reach above your shoulders too often or for long periods.

Check with your cardiologist during your follow-up visit 4 weeks after heart surgery before moving to moderate activities.

Moderate Activities:

- Hanging laundry on the line to dry
- Cleaning at slow pace (example: vacuuming, washing floors, laundry)
- Shopping for groceries and carrying the bags.
- Doing light home repairs (example: hanging a small picture)



Heavy Activities (8 weeks after surgery and after seeing your cardiac surgeon):

- Shovelling snow
- Doing heavy washing or scrubbing overhead
- Doing heavy gardening: digging, spading, raking, trimming branches overhead
- Playing tennis, jogging, swimming, or bicycling at a moderate to rapid pace
- Doing heavy home repairs (example: painting a room)

Activity and Pain

If you are feeling pain during an activity, try doing the task differently. See our helpful tips below. Please do not “tough it out” or think “no pain, no gain”. If you do, you may experience more pain later.

Kitchen Tasks

- Place items you use most on a level that is easy to reach. Avoid placing items in low cupboards or on high shelves (above shoulder height). Or use tools to help you get them. One example of a tool is the “Reacher”. It can be used to pick up things that are on high shelves or that fall to the floor
- Do only light kitchen activities in the first 4-6 weeks:
 - Wipe counters lightly with a cloth
 - Wash dishes and let them air dry
 - Only lift items that are less than 10 lbs.
- Use caution when carrying objects in the kitchen:
- Hold objects (pots and bowls) with both hands
- Hold objects close to your body. This spreads the weight of the object across more muscles
- Whenever possible, slide the item across the countertop (example: hot pots)



Lifting

- Bring your body close to the item that you want to lift
- Bend your knees and hold the item close to your body
- Lift with your legs, NOT with your arms and back

Bathroom Tasks

- Bathtub
- Do not take a tub bath until your incisions (cuts) are well healed, at least 4-6 weeks after surgery
- Do not use extremely hot water as this may cause you to feel weak or dizzy

Shower

- You may shower after surgery. If you sit on a bath chair or bath bench, you will use less energy
- Using a hand-held showerhead may also help you
- Use a grab bar in your tub if you have trouble moving around (please speak with an Occupational Therapist (OT). The OT will tell you the best place to install the grab bars for your safety and independence.

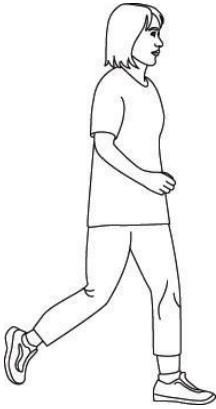
Toilet

- Most people do not have difficulty getting on and off the toilet. For those who do, it is usually because the toilet seat is low. You may need a raised toilet seat to increase the height of the seat. If you need something to hold onto, you can install a wall grab bar or side rails for the toilet.

NOTE: Avoid driving for at least 4 weeks after surgery, as your reaction time is slow because of weakness, tiredness and medications. Do not use saunas and hot tubs for at least 6 weeks. Talk to your family doctor before using either.



How Much Walking Can I Do?



Walking is a good activity for people who have had heart surgery because it requires no special equipment and you can do more, as you feel better.

The charts below give you examples of how fast and how often you can walk. A general rule is to start with many, short walks each day and then gradually take longer but fewer walks each day. To be safe when you exercise, remember to listen to your body and **STOP** if you feel pain or are feeling unwell. Also, your heart rate during and after exercising should be **NO MORE** than 20 beats/minute faster than your heart rate before you exercised (See Appendix A for how to take your heart rate).

If you are not able to walk outdoors, walk in the house or go to a nearby shopping mall. If you live in a high-rise building, you can take the elevator up a few floors and walk through the hallways and down the stairs back to your apartment. You can also use a stationary bike at low resistance or a treadmill at low speed.

The chart below gives you an example of how fast and how often the average cardiac surgery patient can walk in his/her first week home. Remember to always listen to your body and to take your heart rate so you can exercise safely.

Week 1 at Home Recommended walking speed: Slow Pace (Up to 2 miles/hour or 3 kilometres/hour)		
Day	Number of Walks (per day)	Minutes spent walking (each walk)
1	4 - 8	5
2	4 - 8	6
3	3 - 6	7
4	3 - 6	8
5	3 - 5	9
6	3 - 4	10
7	3 - 4	11

Week 2 at Home Recommended walking speed: Slow Pace (Up to 2 miles/hour or 3 kilometres/hour)		
Day	Number of Walks (per day)	Minutes spent walking (each walk)
8	2 - 4	12
9	2 - 3	13
10	2 - 3	14
11	2 - 3	15
12	2 - 3	16
13	2 - 3	17
14	2 - 3	18



Week 3 at Home Recommended walking speed: Moderate Pace (Up to 3 miles/hour or 5 kilometres/hour)		
Day	Number of Walks (per day)	Minutes spent walking (each walk)
15	2	19
16	2	20
17	2	21
18	2	22
19	1	23
20	1	24
21	1	25

Week 4 at Home Recommended walking speed: Moderate Pace (Up to 3 miles/hour or 5 kilometres/hour)		
Day	Number of Walks (per day)	Minutes spent walking (each walk)
22	1	26
23	1	27
24	1	28
25	1	29
26	1	30
27	1	30
28	1	30

Important tips about exercise

- Always warm-up (before exercising) and cool down (after exercising). Your warm-up or cool down should include a few minutes of slow walking to let your heart rate gradually rise **before** you exercise and gradually fall **after** you exercise. You should also do a few stretches to loosen up your muscles.
- Wear loose, comfortable clothing and appropriate walking or running shoes.
- Wait 2 hours, after a large meal or after drinking alcoholic or caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea or cola).
- Add new activities slowly. If you feel tired or sore the day after you start a new activity, then you may be pushing yourself too hard.
- Avoid outside activities in extreme weather as extreme temperatures can be hard on your heart (for example, don't exercise outside when the temperatures are lower than -8°C or higher than 27°C; or there's a humidex reading higher than 39°C).
 - Do not hold your breath during exercise. **Breathe out on effort.**



Can I Climb Stairs?

Yes, you can climb stairs when you need to but not as an exercise routine. In the first 2 weeks at home, try and limit yourself to 1 flight of stairs (up and down) per day. Climb slowly – one step at a time. Use the handrail for support. If you become tired or dizzy, stop and rest for a minute. When you reach the top of the stairs, you may be short of breath or feel your heart pounding. This will get better after you stop and rest.

The 3 rules to help guide activity

- 1. Stop if you feel:**
 - pain
 - upset stomach
 - very tired
 - short of breath
 - dizzy or lightheaded
 - your heart racing or pounding
- 2. Use the walk/talk test**

You should be able to walk and talk at the same time without feeling short of breath.
- 3. Check your pulse**

Checking your pulse is a good way to see how hard your heart is working. To exercise at a safe level your heart rate (pulse) **after** exercise should be no more than 20 beats per minute higher than your heart rate **before** exercise. To learn how to take your pulse see page 28.



Should I Have Visitors?

Visits from relatives and friends can be enjoyable, but they can also be very tiring. Try to limit the number of visitors to no more than two a day at first. Don't hesitate to excuse yourself if you begin to feel tired.

What About Sex?

Many patients and their partners have questions and concerns about restarting sexual activity after heart surgery. Some patients find that their sex drive may be decreased in the early recovery period. This is usually temporary and should not cause undue anxiety. Remember to be patient and to talk with your partner about your feelings.

In the recovery period, hugging and kissing can be an enjoyable way to bring couples closer together.

If you can climb 2 flights of stairs without becoming too tired or short of breath, you may resume sexual intercourse.

Avoid having sex after a large meal or considerable physical exercise. If you are tired or tense, wait until you feel better before having sex.

Avoid taking the weight of your body on your arms for at least 6 weeks after surgery. If certain positions cause discomfort, try different ones. The best positions are on your side, or with the person who has had surgery on the bottom.



What About Healthy Heart Eating?

You may find that your appetite is poor after surgery. This will improve as you begin to feel better. You have extra nutritional needs for calories and protein during the recovery period. At first, you may find that eating several small meals or snacks during the day is easier. You might need to drink a nutritional supplement. You should not try to lose weight during the recovery period. Later in your recovery a registered dietician (RD) can help you set up your healthy weight goals. Remember that balanced nutrition speeds healing and lessens fatigue.

Following a lower fat, high fiber diet, achieving a healthy body weight and limiting your salt intake can make a difference to your heart health. You can follow the “Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide” (<http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide>). Appendix C has some general recommendations about heart healthy food choices.

If you need more information or have other health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure, being overweight, high blood sugar after surgery, or congestive heart failure, you should speak to a dietitian about additional dietary recommendations. Your cardiologist, family doctor or the UHN team can give you a referral to see a dietitian.

What About Alcohol?

Alcoholic beverages in moderation are permitted. Moderation means less than 1-2 drinks per day. One drink is equal to one bottle of beer or one 5-ounce glass of wine or one shot (1½ ounces) of liquor. Please note that drinking may interfere with some medications, for example Warfarin. Alcohol can also affect blood tryglycerides, blood pressure, and blood sugar. You should discuss alcohol intake with your doctor or another healthcare professional.

When Can I Go Back to Work?

Everyone is unique. You should talk to your cardiologist 4-8 weeks after surgery. When you can return to work depends on:



- The type of work you do
- Demands of your job
- The level of physical activity needed to do your job. If your type of work involves a lot of lifting or pushing heavy objects, you may have to wait a little longer before going back to work.

How Can I Maintain Stay Healthy My Health After Surgery?

No matter what kind of heart surgery you had, it is up to you to keep healthy. You may need to make some changes in your lifestyle after surgery to improve your health. Committing to heart-healthy choices is important and can be done one day at a time.

For bypass patients, it is important to modify your risk factors for coronary artery disease even after your surgery. Coronary artery disease can still progress after surgery. Bypass grafts may block over time, or disease may develop in other arteries. Modifying your risk factors reduces this possibility.

Risk factors are conditions or habits that have been found to increase the chance that a person will develop coronary artery disease during their lifetime. The majority of risk factors for heart disease apply to both men and women. We know that some risk factors are beyond our control.

These include:

- Family history (heredity)
- Age
- Gender

Other factors can be changed. These include:

- Smoking
- Blood pressure
- Diet
- High blood cholesterol
- Lack of exercise
- Diabetes
- Stress



Make a commitment to learn more about your condition and make some choices to improve your health!

To help maintain a healthy lifestyle, it is recommended that you:

1. Avoid smoking or second-hand smoke.
2. Maintain a healthy weight for your height.
3. Exercise regularly.
4. Look at ways to reduce emotional tension and stress.
5. Monitor other health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
6. Take your medications as prescribed.
7. Keep appointments with your doctors to help monitor your health.
8. Eat a healthy diet. For example follow “Eating Well with Canada’s Food Guide (<http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide>). See a Registered Dietician for individual assessment.

If you have any questions about your heart problem or risk factors for heart disease, ask a health care professional. See Appendix D for a list of community resources and reading material that can help you learn more about how you can look after your health.



Other Supports

Cardiac Rehabilitation

Most people should not start in a cardiac rehabilitation program for at least 4-6 weeks after surgery. To join a cardiac rehab program you will need a referral from your family doctor or cardiologist. Most programs are covered under OHIP.

Cardiac rehabilitation programs can help you achieve a healthy lifestyle. These programs may provide patients with a structured, supervised environment to improve heart and body fitness. You will also receive education about heart disease and have the opportunity to exchange information with other patients who have had heart surgery, a heart attack or chest pain. The staff at the rehab centre will do an exercise test and design an exercise program to meet your needs.

Listed below are a number of programs in the Greater Toronto area. If you live outside these areas, ask the physiotherapist on the ward or your family doctor about available programs. You may also call the Cardiac Rehabilitation Department at the Toronto Western Hospital (416-603-5268) to find out about a program near you.

Cardiac Rehabilitation Programs in Greater Toronto Area

Program	Address	Telephone
University Health Network Cardiac Rehabilitation Program	399 Bathurst St., Toronto, ON (Bathurst/Dundas)	(416) 603-5268
Toronto Rehabilitation Centre Cardiac Rehab and Secondary Prevention Rumsey Centre	347 Rumsey Rd., Toronto, Ont. (Eglinton/ Bayview)	(416) 597-3422 ext. 5200



Program	Address	Telephone
St. Joseph's Health Centre	30 Queensway, Toronto, Ont. (Roncesvalles/Queensway)	(416) 530-6148
Lakeridge Health-Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation	1 Hospital Court Oshawa, ON	(905) 576-8711 ext. 4825
Rouge Valley Health System: Scarborough Centenary Site Cardiac Prevention & Rehabilitation Services	2867 Ellesmere Rd. Scarborough, Ont.	(416) 281-7113
Credit Valley Hospital Cardiovascular Rehabilitation Program	2200 Eglinton Avenue, Mississauga, ON (Eglinton/ Hwy. 403)	(905) 813-4198
Halton Healthcare Services – Oakville-Trafalgar Hospital Cardiac Rehab Program	327 Reynolds Street, Oakville, ON	(905) 845-2571 ext. 6653
Southlake Regional Health Centre Heart Works Cardiac Rehab	Tannery Hall 4th Floor 465 Davis Drive Newmarket, ON	(905) 895-4521 ext. 2806
York-Central Hospital	10 Trench Street, Richmond Hill, ON	(905) 883-2000



Program	Address	Telephone
Trillium Health Centre: Cardiac Wellness and Rehabilitation Centre	Queensway Site 150 Sherway Drive Etobicoke, ON	(416) 521-4068
William Osler Health centre: Brampton Civic Campus Etobicoke General Campus	2100 Bovaird Drive East, Brampton ON 101 Humber College Blvd. Etobicoke, ON	(905) 494-6479 (416) 494-2120 ext. 37021
Women's Cardiovascular Health Initiative	76 Grenville Street 7th Floor Toronto, ON	(416) 323-6400 ext. 4883 or (416) 323-6106

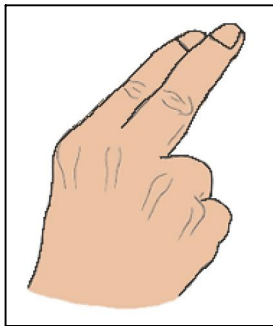
For more information, see <http://www.patienteducation.ca/>



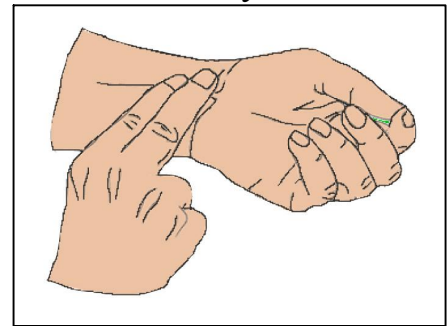
Appendix A: Checking Your Pulse

Checking your pulse is a good way to tell how hard your heart is working. If this is new to you, your nurse or physiotherapist can help you learn how to do it.

Use these two fingers to feel your pulse.
Do not use your thumb.



Lightly press your fingers just above the skin creases, on the thumb side of your wrist.



Count the number of pulsating beats in a 10 second period, before, during and after you exercise. You can also purchase special monitors to take your heart rate for you.

Resting Heart Rate (your heart rate **before** exercise) ♥

- A normal resting pulse is 10 to 16 beats/10 sec or 60 to 100 beats/min.
- If your resting pulse is more than 20 beats/10 sec (or 120 beats/min), you should exercise **very slowly**.

Exercise Heart Rate (your heart rate **during** and **after** exercise) ♥

- For the first 4 to 6 weeks after surgery, your exercise heart rate should **not be** more than 4 beats/10 sec **above** your resting pulse.
- For the first 4 to 6 weeks after surgery, your exercise heart rate itself should **not be more** than 20 beats/10 sec or 120 beats/minute.

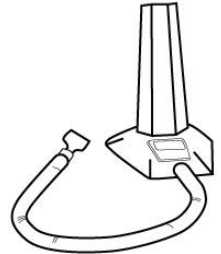


Appendix B: Exercises

Exercises after your Surgery (To be completed every hour)

1. Breathing with Incentive Spirometer

- Breathe in deeply to move the ball to the top.
- Keep the ball at the top for 3 seconds. **10 times**
- Breathe out.



2. Deep Breathing Exercises

10 times

- Relax your shoulders; put your hand on your stomach.
- Breathe in while pushing out your stomach.
- Feel your chest expanding.
- Hold your breath for 3 seconds.
- Breathe out slowly.



3. Splinted cough

3 times

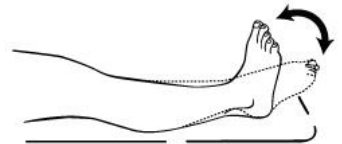
- Position pillow tightly against your incision.
- Cough twice in a row and rest in between.



4. Ankle Pumping

10 times

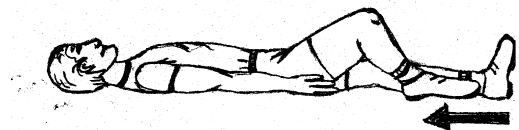
- Lying on your back or sitting in a chair, bend your feet up and down.



5. Leg Slides

5-10 times

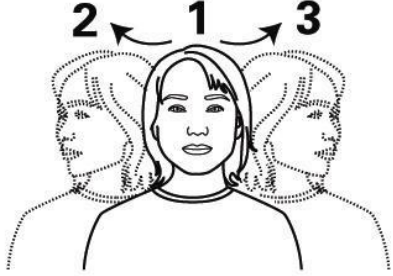
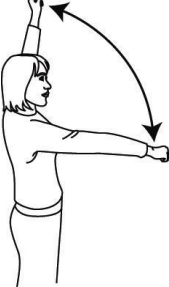
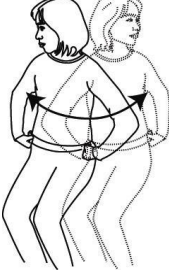
- Lying on your back, slide legs up and down bending your knees.
- Repeat one leg at a time, with your heel slightly off the bed.

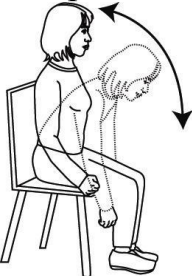
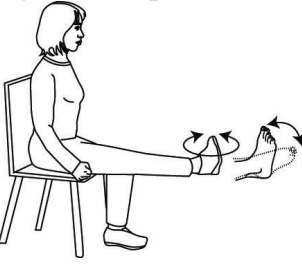


Some Simple Stretching Exercises

You should do these stretches every day for 2 to 3 weeks following your surgery. You can do these stretches while sitting in a chair. After the first 2 to 3 weeks, you can also include these stretches as part of your warm-up (before exercise) and cool-down (after exercise).

Repeat each stretch several times. Stretches should be **gentle, slow** and **steady**. Be careful not to over stretch, none of these stretches should hurt you. **Hold** each stretch for about 10-15 seconds.

Neck stretch	Arms above head	Trunk rotation
<p>Slowly turn your head to look over right shoulder, then back to centre. Turn your head to look over left shoulder. Repeat.</p> 	<p>With your arm out straight in front of you, at shoulder height, slowly raise it above your head and then lower it to shoulder level. Repeat with the other arm.</p> 	<p>With your hands on your hips, slowly twist your head and upper body to look towards your left. Then twist to the right. Repeat.</p> 

Reverse curl	Leg straightening
<p>Sag forward in your chair. Slowly straighten up. Pull your shoulder blades together and tighten your tummy muscles. Hold. Repeat.</p> 	<p>Keep your thigh on the chair. Straighten your right leg. Pump your ankle up, down and around. Relax. Switch legs and repeat.</p> 



Appendix C: Healthy Heart Eating Guidelines

These guidelines are based on the new Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide 2007 (<http://www.healthcanada.gc.ca/foodguide>).

Follow Eating Well with Canada's Food Guide 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasize vegetables and fruits, whole grains, and unsaturated fats • Enjoy a variety of foods from the five food groups (vegetables and fruit; grain products, milk and alternatives, meat and alternatives, oils and fats)
Achieve and maintain a reasonable body weight	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balance energy in (food) with energy out (physical activity).
Use the right amount of the right kinds of fats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use unsaturated fats (eg: liquid vegetable oils including olive oil, canola oil, non-hydrogenated margarine) • Cut down on saturated fat (eg: solid animal fats such as butter, lard, palm & coconut oil) and trans fat (eg: shortening) • Learn to read food labels to see the kind of fat that is in what you are buying.
Choose lower fat dairy products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose milk products with less than 1% milk fat (M.F). • Choose lower fat cheeses (less than 8% M.F.).
Reduce cholesterol intake	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit the number of egg yolks to 2 or less per week. • Eat less shrimp, squid, organ meats



<p>Limit intake of sugar and sweets</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most sweets tend to be high in calories and low in nutrients, so choose these foods less often. This will help to maintain a healthy weight.
<p>Drink alcohol in moderation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderation means less than 2 drinks per day. One drink is equal to one bottle of beer or one 5-ounce glass of wine or one shot (1½ ounces) of liquor. • Check with your doctor regarding alcohol.



Appendix D: Selected Resources

Heart & Stroke Foundation of Ontario

1920 Young St., 4th Floor Toronto, Ontario M4S 3E2	416-489-7111 Web site address: http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca/
<p>The Heart and Stroke Foundation of Ontario has a variety of resources available for men and women who have or at risk of heart and stroke disease. Call the Health line number above and request a catalogue of information available. You can receive information on a number of topics, such as reducing risk factors for heart disease, angina, heart valves, women & family, coping with stress, cholesterol, healthy heart eating and reading food labels. You can also ask about the Heart To Heart program, which provides education and support.</p>	

Registered Dietitians

Cardiac Dietitians, University Health Network	While in hospital: 340-4800 Ext. 3139 Cardiac Outpatient RD: 416-603-5800 Ext 6480 * Your cardiologist or family doctor can send a referral form to see the UHN Cardiac Care & Heart Health Dietitian directly to: fax # 416-603-5274 (please ask them to include a detailed medical history and any recent blood work with the referral form)
Dietitians of Canada Web Site	http://www.dietitians.ca/ Find a dietitian; FAQ sheets
Health Canada's Nutritional Online Service	http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/
American Dietetic Association	http://www.eatright.org/

Smoking Cessation Programs

The Lung Association	http://www.lung.ca/	416-696-9240
Smoke Enders	http://www.smokenders.com/	1-800-828-4357
Canadian Cancer Society	http://www.cancer.ca/	1-800-268-8874



Stress Management/Relaxation

Ontario Psychological Association Referral Service or ask your hospital team or family doctor for a referral to a psychiatrist, psychologist, or social worker.	416-961-0069
Dorothy Madgett Relaxation Clinic Ask your family doctor for a written referral.	416-340-7070

Medic-Alert Bracelet

Canadian Medic-Alert Foundation	250 Ferrand Dr. Toronto, Ontario M4C 3G8	416-696-0267
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Community Care Access Centres

The *Home Care Program* provides health and personal support services at home. Services at home may include visiting nursing, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work, nutritional counseling, personal care assistance and speech therapy. An assessment is made by a hospital Home Care Coordinator before hospital discharge to determine eligibility and the services required at home.

Nutrition and Healthy Heart Eating Cookbooks

- ♥ *The American Association Low-Salt Cookbook: A Complete Guide to Reducing Sodium and Fat* by Clarkson Potter Publishers, 3rd edition, 2006
- ♥ *More Heart Smart Cooking* by Bonnie Stern, Heart & Stoke Foundation of Ontario, 1997
- ♥ *Cooking Vegetarian* by Vesanto Melina, Joseph Forest, Macmillan Canada, 1996
- ♥ *Multicultural Cooking Light and Easy* by Kay Spicer, Mighton House, 1995
- ♥ *Heart Smart Chinese Cooking* by Stephen Wong, Douglas & McIntyre, 1996
- ♥ *Heart Smart Flavors of India* by Hrishna Jamal, Douglas & McIntyre, 1998.
- ♥ *Women Hearts' All Heart Family Cookbook* by Kastan, K. & Banfield, S., 2008 NY: Rodale



Women & Heart Disease

- ♥ Goldberg, N. (2002). *Women are not small men: life-saving strategies for preventing and healing heart disease in women*. 1st edition New York, Ballantine Books
- ♥ Kramer, H. M. & Libov, C. (2007). *A women's guide to heart attack recovery: how to survive, thrive and protect your heart*. M. Evans
- ♥ Nelson, M. E. & Lichtenstein, A. H. (c2005). *Strong women, strong hearts : proven strategies to to prevent and reverse heart disease now*. New York : G.P. Putnam Sons
- ♥ Pashkow, F. J. & Libov, C. (2001). *The Women's heart book. the complete guide to keeping your heart healthy*. Completely rev. and updated. New York: Hyperion

General Reading

- ♥ *A Change of Heart: Recovery From Heart Disease – In Body and Mind* by Dr. Brian Baker & Dr. Paul Dorian, Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada, 1998
- ♥ *Coronary heart disease: A guide to diagnosis and treatment*. Second Edition. By Barry M. Cohen and Bobbie Hasselring. Addicus Books, 2007
- ♥ *Take heart: A Proven Step-By-Step Program To Improve Your Heart's Health* by Dr. Terence Kavanaugh, 3rd Edition, revised. Key Porter Books, 2004.

General Web Sites

- ♥ Heart & Stroke Foundation of Canada at http://www.heartandstroke.on.ca/site/c.pvl3leNWJwE/b.3581583/k.F7E3/Heart_Disease_Stroke_and_Healthy_Living.htm
Click on “Heart Disease”, “Stroke”, and “Healthy Living” for patient education information
- ♥ Cardiac Rehabilitation – Toronto Rehab at <http://www.torontorehab.on.ca/patient/cardiac/index.htm>
This program aims at providing patients with the information, motivation and support they need to adopt and maintain heart-healthy habits.
- ♥ CardiacCare Network of Ontario at <http://www.ccn.on.ca/>
CCN's goals are improving quality, efficiency, access and equity in the delivery of cardiac services in Ontario. It monitors waiting lists for cardiac procedures at Ontario hospitals.
- ♥ Nevil Thomas Adult Congenital Heart Library at www.achd-online.com
Provides access to multimedia learning resources on the subject of congenital heart defects in the adolescent and adult.



General Web Sites (cont'd)

♥ National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at

<http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/heart/index.htm>

As part of the US Federal Government's National Institutes of Health, it provides health information for patients/public, health professional, and educators. Also see their Disease and Conditions Index for a quick and easy way to get complete and dependable information.

♥ American Heart Association at

<http://www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=1200000>

Provides a wide range of cardiovascular health and stroke topics.

♥ Heart Failure Online at www.heartfailure.org/index.htm

Website dedicated to patients with heart failure.

♥ British Heart Foundation at www.bhf.org.uk

Click on “Hearthealth” icon to find valuable information about heart disease and related issues.

♥ Glossary of Heart Terms at

www.health-news-and-information.com/4cfvhs/libv/h15.shtml

This glossary, adapted from the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute of the National Institutes of Health, can help to understand heart disease and its symptoms.

♥ Heart Information Network at <http://www.healthcentral.com/heart-disease>

Provides a wide range of information to heart patients and others interested in learning about lowering risk factors for heart disease.

♥ Up to Date Patient Information at <http://www.uptodate.com/home/index.html>

Information written for patients and their families provides an overview, and a good deal of detail, on heart disease.

