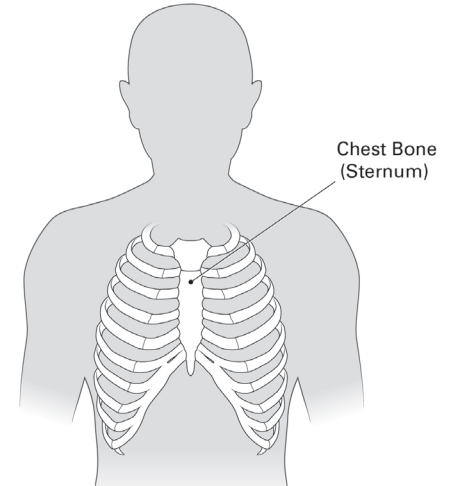


Moving After a Sternotomy

During your surgery, the bone at the centre of your chest (known as your sternum) was cut. **It can take up to 12 weeks to heal.**

It is important to protect your chest while your sternum is healing.

- Moving after your surgery will help with your breathing, healing and discomfort.
- **Make sure you are moving your body without it hurting.**
- STOP what you are doing if you hear any clicking at your chest or feel a lot of pain (more than usual) at the incision site.



Sternal precautions:

(Instructions to follow for the first 6 to 8 weeks after surgery)

- **When you cough or sneeze:** Hold and gently squeeze a pillow against your chest bone.
- **When you get in our out of bed:** Use the “log-roll” method. Do not reach for hand rails. Instead, use your legs to help you roll onto your side, bring your legs off the bed, and use your elbow to push yourself into the bed, bringing your upper body upright.
- **When you stand up from sitting:** Cross your arms over your chest and lean forward. Use your legs to push you up.
- **When you lift, push or pull:** Keep your elbows and upper arms close to your body.
- **When you reach over your head:** Move both arms at the same time and do so in a pain free range.





Tips to help you heal:

- **When you stand from a chair:** Be sure family and friends don't pull on your arm to help you stand. If you need help, ask them to support your hips instead.
- **When you go up or down stairs:** Be sure you place no more than 10 pounds (5 kilograms) on the handrail.
- **When you lift objects heavier than 10 pounds:** Keep your elbows close to your body, or ask for help.
- **When you open heavy doors:** Use your body to push the door open. Keep your elbows close to your body when pulling the door open.
- **When you put on your bra:** Tie the clasps in front of your body. Then turn the bra around and place your arms through the straps to avoid having to reach behind you.
- **When you ride in a car:** Place a pillow or rolled towel between your chest and the seat belt. Always wear your seat belt.
- **Avoid** wearing back packs.
- **Keep your back straight** when you stand and sit. Do not slouch.
- **Consider using** a bath chair and hand held shower when you bathe. Use a raised toilet seat over your toilet to help with sitting and standing.

Visit www.uhnpatienteducation.ca for more health information.

Contact us to provide feedback or request this brochure in a different format, such as large print or electronic formats: pfep@uhn.ca

© 2018 University Health Network. All rights reserved.

Use this material for your information only. It does not replace advice from your doctor or other health care professional. Do not use this information for diagnosis or treatment. Ask your health care provider for advice about a specific medical condition. You may print 1 copy of this brochure for non-commercial and personal use only.

Form: D-5934 | Author: Sophie Mendo, MHScPT | Revised: 08/2018