



CARDIOTHORACIC & VASCULAR SURGICAL ASSOCIATES, P.A.

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CARDIOTHORACIC SURGERY DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

These are guidelines for you to follow for three (3) weeks or until you see your surgeon.

Surgeries included are:

**Coronary artery bypass grafting
Open-Heart
Lung**

ACTIVITIES:

Get up and get dressed every day. Reestablish your routine. Go to the table for meals.

Do your physical therapy exercises twice a day as directed.

Maintain good posture.

Walk everyday as directed in your home walking program.

Make a walking course in your home – walk 4 times a day. You may use a treadmill but do not use incline or increase your speed until instructed.

Feel free to walk outdoors but avoid extremes of temperature.

You may go up and down stairs but take it slowly and rest as needed.

Feel free to do light housework and hobbies such as fishing from a dock or shore, putting practice, playing cards, and needlework.

Do not be surprised if you tire easily and feel weak. This is normal and will pass.

Listen to your body and rest if you are tired.

- Elevate your legs higher than heart level while sitting
- Remember not to cross your legs or stand for long periods, this impedes circulation.

Don't smoke. This is important as to help keep your bypass grafts open.

Take your pain medication as needed. It is very helpful at night and first thing in the morning. It is not unusual to need pain medications for up to four (4) weeks after surgery. The length of time that patients require pain medications varies from patient to patient. You may need it for a longer period of time or you might need it for a shorter period of time.

Continue to use the inspiriometer at least four (4) times a day.

Take your blood thinner as directed. Be sure your physician is following with lab test and dosage.

It is perfectly normal to have some "blue" days. You may be experience crying spells, depression, and sad spells for no apparent reason. This is normal.

SYMPTOMS THAT NEED THE DOCTORS ATTENTION:

Return of angina. We do not expect you to have angina postoperatively, but if you do you need to call your doctor immediately. Angina is usually felt as heavy pressure, a tight, constricting, or burning sensation in the chest. It may be difficult to tell the difference between anginal pain and incisional pain. Let your doctor help you make that decision.

Irregularities of heartbeat:

- If you feel your heart skipping, jumping, or racing while at rest for more than 15-20 minutes, call your doctor immediately.
- If your pulse feels irregular or is difficult to count for more than 15-20 minutes, call your doctor immediately.
- If your pulse rate gets over 120 beats per minute for at least 15-20 minutes, call your doctor immediately.

Incisional problems:

- If your incisions separate, get puffy, get red, hot, or tender, call your doctor.
- If your incisions drain pus, yellow, green, or white secretions or a large amount of bright red blood, call your doctor immediately.
- If your temperature goes over 101 degrees, call your doctor immediately.
- If your chest incision soreness gets worse for several days instead of better, or if your chest incision begins to hurt when you take a deep breath, call your doctor.

It is fairly common to have some clear or pinkish drainage from your incisions. This is normal and will pass with time. You may have raised areas along incision sites, these usually are seromas (fluid filled) or hematomas (blood filled) areas that sometime take weeks for your body to absorb. If sites become larger or become tender, call your doctor immediately.

To help with incisional discomfort-apply a heating pad on low for 15 minutes to the incisional areas. You may do this every 4-6 hours as needed.

For carotid surgery-you may use ice packs on the incision. Please make sure that you have a clean cloth between the ice pack and the neck.

OPEN HEART SURGERIES:

It is normal to have popping or clicking sensations in the chest with movement or when lying on your side. It is common to have brief periods of stabbing, aching, and burning chest pain. Your chest may become sensitive to touch. You may have back pain between the shoulder blades and at the base of your neck. Use of your pain medication and a heating pad should help this.

The leg(s) from which the veins were removed will be prone to swelling postoperatively. This is common and can last for up to several weeks. The swelling is improved by wearing your support stockings (TED's). Remove the stockings at night and put them on every morning before standing and getting out of bed.

DIET:

It is common to have a decreased appetite for a few weeks. This is not a time to begin a weight loss program or initiate big changes in your diet. A nutritious diet is important to proper healing. Wait one month after surgery to pursue a weight loss program. Eat 5-6 small meals instead of 3 large meals.

Avoid adding salt to your food.

It is not unusual to feel bloated or feel full quickly when eating.

In about 4-8 weeks, you should consider eating low fat/low cholesterol diets such as the American Heart Association diet.

MISCELLANEOUS:

Weigh yourself everyday:

- In the morning
- In the same amount of clothing
- Before eating or drinking anything
- On the same scale
- Empty your bladder first
- Watch for a gain of 2-3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in one week and report fluid build-up to your physician.

You may ride in the car for short trips (get a hair cut, go out to eat, etc.)

Until your doctor gives the o.k. (after about three (3) weeks)

1. Don't drive
2. Don't lift, push or pull over 10 pounds (no lifting children, pets, groceries, laundry, etc.)
3. Do not open heavy doors, stuck windows, or jar lids.
4. Don't engage in sexual activities until you feel comfortable. For chest and abdominal surgeries avoid positions that put weight on your breastbone or upper arms.

REST:

Take three (3) rest periods each day. The best time is after each meal for at least 45 minutes. You don't have to go to bed, just sit quietly with your feet elevated and relax.

Limit visitors and avoid crowds for the first 1-2 weeks as this can be very tiring.

Allow for a rest period between each activity that you perform.

If you have trouble sleeping you may take Tylenol PM or Benadryl 25-50-mg at night.

INCISIONAL CARE:

Feel free to shower. You may remove dressings but leave steri-strips in place. Choose soap without heavy perfumes or deodorant. (Ivory)

Clean any scabs or crusting on the incisions once or twice a day with SAF-CLENS.

Don't take tub baths until your incisions are completely healed (about three (3) weeks).

Don't use powders, cornstarch, lotions, or salves on your incisions.

Don't be concerned if your incisions itch. This is normal and it means they are healing.

Any sign of fluid build-up:

- Weight gain of 2-3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds in one week.
- Severe swelling of legs, ankles, or feet.
- Difficulty breathing in a flat position, especially at night, or shortness of breath with activities you had no problems with a few days earlier.

FOLLOW-UP:

Make an appointment to see your surgeon in three weeks

Phone number:	384-3343	St. Vincent's Office
	398-3888	Baptist Office
	398-8147	Memorial Office
	494-2394	St. Augustine Office
	592-4940	Orange Park Office

Check with the office to see if you need a chest x-ray or CT scan before your first postoperative appointment.

Call your cardiologist/internist/primary care physician for a follow-up appointment.

STAPLES/SUTURES:

If you have been discharged with sutures or staples, arrangements can be made to have them removed by either a visiting nurse or you can call the office.