

Cardiac Surgery Education Plan

Getting Ready to Learn About Cardiac Surgery

Learning something new can be hard. It is even harder if you are not feeling well. The purpose of this education plan is for you and the staff to review the following information together. Here are some good things to tell the staff:

- Who you want to learn with you. We would like to have someone who will be helping you at home learn with you.
- The best way for you to learn. Do you learn best by reading a book or pamphlet, or by doing things yourself?
- If you are not feeling well, if you are in pain or you cannot focus on learning right now.

This information is important to your health. We may explain something more than once. We will be giving you information in small bits over several days. If there is something you don't understand **it's okay to ask us** to explain.

What I Need to Learn About Cardiac Surgery

By the time I leave the hospital I will be able to tell the staff:

1. How to care for my incisions following surgery.
2. How I need to cough and deep breathe and use my incentive spirometer.
3. The limits I have using my arms and how much I can lift.
4. What medicines I need to take for heart health.
5. How to be active and be careful following surgery.
6. How to eat in order to heal from surgery.
7. Why I have to quit smoking.
8. The importance of follow up care.

The staff will use three questions and answers to teach me about Cardiac Surgery:

1. What is my main problem?
2. What do I need to do?
3. Why is this important to me?

The staff will ask me to repeat back important points in my own words, or ask me to show what I have learned. They want to make sure that I know about my condition and how to take care of myself.

What is my main problem?

I have had open-heart surgery. In order to reach my heart, my breastbone was cut open. There are things I need to do while the breastbone heals. My heart is a muscle that needs to get stronger along with my body after surgery. I may need to change some things in my life to heal, prevent problems and have a healthy heart.

What do I need to do?

I will tell the staff how I will care for my incisions following surgery. (See *page 8* in the *As You Recover from Cardiac Surgery Information and Guidelines Book*)

Care of my Incision

- I will wash my hands many times during the day and before touching my incision.
- All my incisions need to be kept clean and dry (including any open area).
- I will not pick at scabs
- I will keep my fingers away from my incisions.
- I will not put lotions, creams or ointments on my incisions.
- I will look for signs of infection.

Increased tenderness

Swelling

Drainage

Fever

Redness

Cleaning my Incision

- I will only take showers. I will not take tub baths because it will require too much pulling and pushing with my arms.
- I will stay out of hot tubs until my surgeon tells me I can go in a hot tub.
- I will clean my incisions every day with soap and water in the shower. Pat dry. This will also clean the staples and stitches.
- The steri-strips may come off in the shower, which is okay. The steri-strips make the incision smaller. They do not hold it together.
- The steri-strips (paper tape strips) should all be removed from my incisions by 2 weeks.
- Surgical skin glue may be covering my incision(s). This will wear off in time, I will not pick it off.

When to call your surgeon

- If my incisions have drainage, swelling or redness.
- If I have a temperature over 101 degrees.
- If I have any heart problems.
 - Chest pain
 - Shortness of breath
 - Jaw or arm pain
 - Nausea, vomiting

I will be able to tell the staff how I will need to cough and deep breathe and use my incentive spirometer.

Incentive Spirometer

- I will take deep breaths and cough every hour for 2 weeks
- I can hold a pillow or folded blanket against my chest when I deep breathe and cough.
- I will still use my Incentive spirometer at least 10 times every hour while I am awake for 2-4 weeks

I will be able to tell the staff the limits I have using my arms and how much I can lift.

Use of arms

- I will not pull or push with my arms. This includes things like:

- Getting in and out of a seated position
- Getting in and out of bed. I will use the transfer method I learned in hospital.
- Mowing the lawn
- Changing sheets on a bed
- Swinging a golf club
- I will use a support pillow to “hug” to my chest when I cough, sneeze, or get up and down.

Lifting

- I will not lift more than 5 pounds

Driving

- I will not drive a car until my surgeon says it’s okay. I will always wear my seatbelt.

I will be able to tell the staff what medicines I need to take for heart health.

- Know the dose and the reason I am taking each medicine. Know how I react to each medicine I am taking or have taken.
 - Beta blockers- (write name of medicine _____) works by slowing my heart rate, which results in stronger squeezing of the heart muscle.
 - Aspirin helps to prevent clots (dose _____).
 - Cholesterol reducing drug (write name of medicine _____), helps lower my cholesterol level to a normal range.
 - Pain medicine (write name of medicine _____) treats aches and pains I have.
- Keep a list of all my current medications at home and in my wallet or purse. Include the names of the doctors who ordered each medication. Emergency care staff looks on the refrigerator for medication lists.

I will be able to tell the staff how I will be active and careful following surgery.

Regular Daily Activity

- I can begin driving after 4-6 weeks if my doctor says it's okay.
- I will not have sex for 1 month. After a month, I can have sex as long as there is no pressure on my chest incision.
- I will refer to the "As You Recover from Cardiac Surgery Information and Guidelines Book" for the following information:
 - Lifting limits - *see page 24*
 - Fishing, golfing, lawn mowing, vacuuming, and other restrictions – *see page 24-25*
- Someone needs to stay with me 24 hours a day for 2 weeks because of what I cannot do for myself.
- I will do 10 ankle pumps every hour while I am resting but awake.
- I will show the nurse how I do ankle exercises:
 - Lie on my back with my legs straight and flat.
 - Flex my ankles by pointing my toes toward the foot of the bed. Then point my toes towards my knee.
 - Trace a circle in air with each foot.

Cardiac Rehabilitation

- Exercises I can do after I get home will start in the hospital. I need to do these exercises 2 times a day. *See page 19.*
- I will rest after activity.
- I will walk 3 times a day. I can begin to do this the first full day I am home from hospital. I need to take my pulse before and after I walk. *See page 20.*
- Make sure I know how to check my pulse. *See page 21.*
- After my surgeon says it is okay, I can start an outpatient cardiac rehab program. *See page 25.*
- Know the signs that my heart is working too hard,
 - I am short of breath
 - My heart pounds
 - I am very tired
 - I am sick to my stomach
 - My pulse does not return to normal after 2 minutes
 - I am light-headed or dizzy

I will be able to tell the staff how I can eat in order to heal from my heart surgery:

Fluid Weight Gain

Excess fluid weight gain makes it hard for my heart to work. To help prevent excess fluid weight gain, I can:

- Limit sodium intake to 2000 to 2400 milligrams per day.
- Weigh myself every day before breakfast.
- If my weight increases by 3 pounds in 1 day or 5 pounds in 5 days, I will call my heart doctor.

Incision Healing

- Eat 2 servings of food that is rich in protein each day. These foods include fish, chicken, turkey, lean meat, beans, peas, and unsalted nuts.
- Eat 3 servings of low-fat or fat-free dairy foods that are rich in protein. These foods include low-fat or fat-free yogurt, cheese and milk.
- Eat 5 servings per day of fruits or vegetables. These foods are rich in vitamins that will help my incision heal.

Bowel Function

- Eat whole grain breads and cereals. Eat brown or wild rice instead of white rice.
- Add beans, peas, or lentils to low-salt soups and casseroles.
- Eat fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Use over the counter stool softeners or laxatives, if needed.

Heart Healthy Diet

- Follow a Therapeutic Lifestyle Change (TLC) diet. *See pages 26 to 35 in the Cardiac Surgery Booklet.*
- Read food labels to know the food content of sodium, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and fiber. *See page 29 in the Cardiac Surgery Booklet.*

I will be able to tell the staff why I have to quit smoking.

- I need to quit smoking for my best heart health.
- If I need help, I will ask my surgeon or heart doctor for support and help.

I will be able to tell the staff the importance of follow up care.

- Follow up care is just as important as taking my medications, eating right, and exercise.
- Home health nurses will visit me at home to make sure my recovery is going well. The nurse will check my incisions, and vital signs including my weight.
- The home health nurse will let the surgeon know how I am doing.

Appointments

- I need to see my surgeon in about 4 weeks after I go home. The surgeon will check that I am healing well enough to do more things.
- I need to see my heart doctor about 1-4 weeks after I go home. The doctor will check on my medications and how my heart is working.
- I need to keep all my appointments to prevent and manage any complications.

Why is this important to me?

Coronary heart disease is life long. I can keep my heart healthy by:

- Taking my medication as ordered
- Exercising every day
- Quitting smoking
- Eating healthy

I can work with my doctor to stay healthy for long periods.

As part of my care and to help me understand Cardiac Surgery, I have received the Cardiac Surgery Education Plan. I may also receive:

- As You Recover from Cardiac Surgery Information and Guidelines Book
- Bronson Cardiac Surgery Video
- Bronson Cardiac Rehabilitation Home Exercise Guidelines

Cardiac Surgery Education Plan

Resources for Staff

- [Open Heart Surgery](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus
- [Heart Healthy Diet](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus

Teaching Tools (Items given to the patient)

- Bronson Video
- [Prevention of Breathing Problems After Surgery](#)

Content of Teaching: See Education Plan

Always close each teaching session with the question, “What questions do you have for me?”

References:

- [Open Heart Surgery](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus
- [Heart Healthy Diet](#)- Nursing Reference Center Plus

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