SWEDISH

THORACIC SURGERY, SWEDISH CANCER INSTITUTE

Home Instructions After **Chest/Lung Surgery**

Diet

You will be on your regular diet when you leave the hospital.

Activities

- It is extremely important to remain active during your surgical recovery in order to prevent complications.
- Continue to exercise your lungs using your Incentive Spirometer and Acapella device daily. It is normal to cough with these lung exercises and to produce secretions mixed with some old blood. These secretions should clear with time.
- Take short (10 minute) walks two to three times a day. Gradually increase the amount of time that you walk.
- Climbing stairs is also permitted.
- Do not lift more than 10 pounds for six weeks.
- Walk your fingers up a wall on the operative side until your arm is fully extended. This helps to stretch the muscles in your arm and chest. It also helps to keep your shoulder moving freely.
- You may drive when you are able to walk a flight of stairs or when you are no longer taking prescription pain medicine. Driving should always be avoided when taking prescription pain medication.
- You will be tired for some time after surgery. Stamina and strength will be slow to return. This is a normal process following any surgical procedure. Attempt to increase activities gradually, but rest when necessary.
- **Patients who have a sternal incision will need to practice sternal precautions for six full weeks starting from the date of surgery. This means eliminating excessive arm movements and activities that will place stress on the sternum while it is healing. Specifically, no lifting, golfing, swimming, tennis, rowing or use of an exercise bicycle with movable handlebars. Additionally, do not do push-ups, sit-ups or chin-ups. Household activities that stress the sternum include manually lifting a garage door, shoveling or gardening and should also be avoided for six weeks.**

Wound Care

- You may shower daily and wash the incision areas gently with warm water and soap. Do not plan to soak in the bathtub or go swimming for four weeks.
- Steri-strips taped over your incision may fall off on their own or may be safely removed after 10 days.
- Any remaining staples or sutures will be removed at your first follow-up visit.
- Slight bruising, itchiness, and numbness at your incision are a normal part of healing.

(continued)

Medications

Take all medications as prescribed. Pain medication will be prescribed for you at the time of discharge. Stool softeners (i.e., Colace) or laxatives (i.e., Miralax) may be necessary for as long as you need prescription pain medications.

When can I return to work?

Most patients will be able to return to work or their usual level of activity within six weeks after surgery. This is a decision between you, your doctor and your employer.

When can I travel?

Please discuss any travel plans you may have after surgery with your doctor.

Call the office at 206-215-6800 if you have:

- Chest pain or rapid heart rate (greater than 120 beats per minute)
- Difficulty breathing comfortably, or shortness of breath
- A productive cough with discolored sputum (green or yellow)
- Fever greater than 101.5° F
- Increasing pain or trouble controlling your pain
- Redness around, or drainage of fluid from, your incision
- No bowel movement for two days in a row
- Nausea lasting more than 24 hours
- Any other questions or concerns

During regular business hours ask to speak to our medical assistant. After hours you will speak with the physician on call.

When do I follow-up?

- Please call the office at **206-386-3831** to schedule a follow-up appointment and a repeat chest X-ray.
- You will be scheduled to see the nurse practitioner within one to two weeks. You will see your surgeon in six weeks.

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