

Surgical Cardiac Exercise Therapy

Warning Signs & Discharge Program

Warning Signs to Remember

If any of these symptoms occur, stop your exercise, rest, and notify your physician if symptoms persist, recur or worsen.

1. Chest pain
2. Excessive weakness
3. Severe shortness of breath
4. Irregular pulse ("skipped beats" or "palpitations")
5. Nausea or vomiting
6. Dizziness or fainting

General Guidelines

These guidelines apply to the next 4-6 weeks after discharge. Beyond this six week restriction, please consult your doctor regarding the guidelines below.

1. Avoid extremes of temperature:
 - a. No hot showers or hot baths. Check with your physician about saunas, whirlpools or hot tubs.
 - b. Avoid prolonged out-of-doors exposure if temperature falls below 45 °F or rises above 85 °F. (Allow for wind chill or high humidity).
2. Avoid straining or lifting or pushing anything over ten (10) pounds including pets, small children, stuck jars or windows.
3. You should check your pulse daily before taking scheduled medications. If your heart rate is ever less than 50 beats per minute, contact your doctor.
4. Check pulse before and after exercise and walking. If your exercise pulse rate is greater than 20 beats per minute above the resting rate, slow down, rest and adjust exercise accordingly.
5. Wait at least two hours after meals to walk or exercise.
6. Avoid becoming overtired while performing any activity.
7. Do not walk up hills, ride an exercise cycle, use a treadmill or jog. You should exercise 5-6 days per week. Take two days off a week, but not two days in a row.
8. Allowing for the discretion of your own

physician, you may be able to return to normal activities by the fifth or sixth week.

Surgical Reminders

During Recovery Period

1. Take temperature daily for first two weeks. It is normal to run low grade fever during this time (98.7 - 100.4). If your fever gets to 100.5 or greater, call your doctor.
2. Weigh yourself every morning, after you have emptied your bladder and before you eat or drink anything. Keep a record of this weight, and notify your doctor if you gain 2-3 pounds from one day to the next.
3. Wash incisions daily with mild soap and warm water and pat dry. Do not use lotions, ointments or powder on the incision site unless directed by your doctor.
4. Examine your incisions daily. Report to your surgeon any signs and symptoms of infection including redness, swelling, pain and persistent or foul smelling drainage.
5. Wear TEDS (elastic stockings) for four weeks after discharge, daytime only. Apply a clean pair every morning. Note that it is OK to get up during the night (e.g. to go to the bathroom) without the stockings on.
6. Elevate your legs to help with swelling. Avoid crossing your legs because this impairs circulation.
7. Use your incentive spirometer as instructed by respiratory therapy.
8. Continue to wear Heart Hugger to support chest with coughing and position changes.
9. Decreased appetite is common for many weeks. A dietary supplement may help to get needed calories.
10. Constipation is also common. It will help to include fruits, juices, fiber and adequate hydration.

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Specific Guidelines

Week 1 begins the day of discharge, not from the date of surgery.

Week 1 and 2

Activities generally limited to the house.

1. Shower or bathe. Rinse incisions thoroughly and pat dry with clean towel. Do not sit in tub and immerse incisions during the first 2 weeks.
2. Rest periods twice a day - approximately one hour each.
3. Walk up the stairs slowly, if applicable.
4. May ride in a car for short distances, for 30-60 minutes.
5. No household activities allowed yet.
6. Enjoy simple hobbies.
7. Brief visits with friends or relatives in your home, but avoid becoming overtired. (Suggested time limit initially is 15-30 minutes at a time.)
8. Warm-up exercises twice daily, as outlined on diagram.
9. Week 1: Ten minute continuous walk once a day, indoors, with 2-3 shorter walks.

Week 2: Accompanied outdoor walking allowed, weather permitting. Increase time of walk by one minute daily, with 2-3 shorter walks.

Week 3

Gradually increase activities

1. Increase distance walked each day by an additional minute. Total time walked by the end of the third week should be approximately 25 minutes. As your walking time increases, you may decrease your number of short walks.
2. Paperwork allowed at home, but set reasonable limits. (Remember: This is a recuperation period!)
3. Perform light housework, such as dusting, preparing simple meals, washing dishes, doing light repairs. Avoid sweeping, mopping, heavy cleaning or gardening.

Week 4

Continue to steadily increase daily activities and walking.

1. Continue daily walks, increasing each day by an additional minute and trying to achieve an increase in heart rate of 20 beats above your resting rate. (This is your "target heart rate". DO NOT EXCEED this rate. You may need to walk a little faster and use your arms. This is not the time to begin jogging.) Distance achieved this week should be one mile in about 30 minutes.
2. Consult your physician regarding starting to drive again.
3. Shopping allowed for short periods (one hour per day), but do not carry heavy bags.
4. Sexual activities may be resumed with modifications as advised by your physician. (Do not be reluctant to discuss this with him or her.)

Week 5 and 6

Continue on your course to resuming "normal" activities again.

1. By the end of the fifth (5th) week, you should be walking approximately 38 minutes continuously. By the end of the six weeks, you should be walking 45 minutes continuously, or approximately two (2) miles.
2. Consult your physician regarding returning to work.
3. Consult your physician regarding attending a Cardiac Rehab Phase II program.

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