

Thoracotomy

Thoracic Surgery Post-operative Discharge Teaching

Patient Information Sheet

For Thoracotomy (larger incision across side into back)

- Please arrange to have a family member stay with you for 1-2 days

Diet

- Resume a regular diet

Dressings

- Bandage over chest tube site may be removed 3 days after chest tube removal and left open to air.
- Bandage over incision to stay on until seen by family doctor in 1 week
- Small amount of clear, yellow drainage is normal

Activity

- No heavy lifting (greater than 10lbs, pushing, pulling or twisting for 4-6 weeks)
- Continue with deep breathing and coughing exercises and incentive spirometer for 2-3 weeks
- Continue with walking and exercises at intervals throughout the day
- No driving for 2 weeks and while taking narcotics (pain medication)

Pain Medication

- You will be given a prescription for pain medication
- It is better to take a small dose more often, according to your prescription to keep pain under control
- You may feel some “pins and needles” and burning around the incision into your breast as your nerves heal
- Muscle spasms and shoulder pain are also common
- Constipation is common when taking narcotics. Take a stool softener while on narcotics or a mild laxative if necessary.

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Bathing

- Sponge bath only until bandage over incision is removed by family doctor in 1 week, then you may shower, pat incision dry, do not apply creams or lotions

Return to work

- 4-6 weeks, consult your physician

Follow-up

- Follow up with family doctor in 1 week to remove bandage, check incision, check breathing and assess pain medications
- Surgical follow-up is pre-booked for scheduled surgery, see your surgical package in white envelope
- Call to confirm appointment a few days before appointment



Call your Family Doctor if you are experiencing any:

- Signs of infection (Fever – Temp greater than 38.5°C, chills, redness around surgical site, drainage that appears like pus or a foul smell from your surgical incision)
- New swelling and pain to lower legs
- Increased pain that is not relieved by pain medication



Go to the closest Emergency if you experience any:

- Bleeding
- Sudden shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chest pain

