

## Open Heart Discharge Instructions

### Activity Limitations

*(These limitations are from the time you leave the hospital)*

- **Do not** drive a car until the surgeon has given you permission. Usually this is four (4) weeks. You may ride in a car as a passenger for short trips. Wear a seat belt.
- **Do not** ride on lawn mowers, tractors, etc. for six to eight weeks.
- **Do not** perform any vigorous activities for six to eight weeks.
- **Do not** lift objects over TEN pounds for three (3) months or as otherwise instructed.
- No swimming, no hot tubs, no conventional bikes or motorcycle for six to eight weeks.
- Stationary exercise bikes are permitted if they **do not** incorporate upper body rowing motion.
- **Do not** bowl, golf or play tennis for three (3) months.
- **Do not** push or pull heavy objects for six to eight weeks.
- Avoid any activities which may strain the chest muscles for six to eight weeks.
- Avoid exercising in extreme heat or cold temperatures.
- Avoid close crowds, such as in church or theaters for four (4) weeks.

### Activities Allowed

- You may climb stairs when you feel strong enough.
- You may shower daily. No tube baths until incisions are completely healed.
- You may resume sexual activities whenever it is comfortable for you.
- You may have company, but keep the number of visitors limited for a few weeks.

- You may have your hair cut or go to the beauty shop when you feel strong enough.
- Our female patients may wear a bra.
- You may begin light household chores when you feel strong enough. **Do not** use upright vacuum for eight to twelve weeks.
- You should gradually increase the amount of activity you perform.

### Cardiac Rehab Exercises And Walking Exercises

- Continue with the exercises explained to you in the hospital.
- Stop doing the exercises if:
  - You Become Fatigued.
  - You Become Short Of Breath.
  - You Have Any Discomfort.
- If any of the above symptoms occur, do the exercises slower and reduce the repetitions during the next exercise session.

### Walking

One of the best things you can do for your good health is to develop a regular exercise program. Walking is an excellent start. It's not only good for your heart and circulation; it will make you feel good about taking control of your health and lifestyle. Listed below are four walking programs you can use to increase your stamina and strength. Begin with Program #1 and gradually work through each program, if you feel able. Walk at your own pace; don't compete or push yourself. If you really enjoy walking and feel strong enough to increase your distance, you may follow the guidelines through the first three programs, and then try Program #4.

## Program #1

Begin by walking ½ block and returning ½ block (approximately 1/10 mile).

- Increase your walking distance by one block at each walking session. You may walk more than one session a day if you feel up to it.
- You should be up to a total of 10 blocks before progressing to Program #2.
- Remember; always walk at a pace that is comfortable to you.

**Example, Session 1:** walk ½ block, return ½ block. Session 2: walk 1 block; return 1 block. Session 3: walk 1 ½ blocks; return 1 ½ blocks. Session 4: walk 2 blocks; return 2 blocks. Continue building on your walking program, adding 1 block each session, until you reach a total of 10 blocks.

## Program #2

- Establish a ¾ mile walking route you feel comfortable with. Walk ¾ miles in about 15-20 minutes, and then return in about 15-20 minutes for a total of 1 ½ miles in 30-40 minutes.
- Walk your route, 1 ½ miles round trip, at least 3 times a week, for 2 weeks, then progress to Program #3.

## Program #3

- Walk 1 mile in about 20-25 minutes, then return 1 mile in about 20-25 minutes, total 2 miles in 40-50 minutes.

## Program #4

If you enjoy walking and would like to walk a greater distance, you can try Program #4. In this program, walk a total of 3 to 4 miles at a pace that is comfortable for you. Remember, as with any of these programs, **do not** increase your distance if you; become tired, become short of breath or experience any discomfort. If any of these symptoms occurred during your last session, reduce your distance and walk slower next time.

## Vacations And Long Trips

Most people are able to take trips four to six weeks after discharge, but you should ask your surgeon when this is permissible. If you are flying, you may be able to go sooner than if you drive.

## Returning To Work

The length of time until you can return to work varies according to the type of work you do, the conditions you work under, and your type of surgical procedure. Usually this is between four to twelve weeks. Discuss this in more detail with your surgeon at your post-operative visit.

## Rest Periods

It is not unusual for you to tire more easily and require more rest. Increase activities slowly and take frequent rest periods until you become stronger.

If you need a nap, take it early in the afternoon. There is no specific amount of time you need to sleep at night, but if you have difficulty sleeping, notify your cardiologists/family doctor.

## Care Of Your Incisions

Usually your incisions should not require any special care. If special care is required, you will be instructed about this. **Do not** apply lotions or creams to the incisions unless instructed to do so. You should wash the incisions with warm soapy water, rinse well, and pat them dry with a towel. As the incisions heal, you may notice numbness along them. It is not unusual for the incisions to be slightly reddened or to itch.

### Please Notify Your Doctor If:

- The redness intensifies or spreads.
- The incisions become very painful.
- The incisions begin to drain pus.
- If you develop chills or a fever.

The stitches will dissolve in time; however, you may notice a thread or knot at each end of the incision. If this is bothersome to you, ask the surgeon to remove it.

## Breathing Exercises

Continue using your spirometer (volurex) for four (4) more weeks. Try to reach your pre-op volume on the spirometer with each deep breath. Take five to ten deep breaths each exercise session. Use the spirometer three to four times a day. Remember to support your chest with your pillow when you have to cough or sneeze.

## Elastic Stockings

Wear your elastic stockings for four (4) more weeks. These help decrease swelling in your lower legs and feet. You may remove the stockings at bedtime and for rest periods, but you should wear them when you are up walking around. It is a good idea to wear the stockings on long trips in the car. It is not unusual for your lower legs and ankles to swell during the first few weeks at home. This may be more noticeable as you increase the time you are up on your feet. If this swelling does occur:

- Continue to wear the stockings
- Elevate your legs on a stool when sitting
- Elevate your legs on a pillow when lying down

## Smoking

**Do Not Smoke!!!!** If you have this habit, it is very important that you quit. If you are unable to do this on your own, you may wish to attend a program for cessation of smoking or discuss different cessation aids with your family doctor. Try to avoid second hand smoke.

## Pain

You may experience post-operative discomfort or pain for several more weeks. This discomfort may be more noticeable with deep breathing. This pain or discomfort:

- Is more constant and does not come all of a sudden.
- Is not associated with stress or activity.
- May move from one place to another in your chest.
- May feel like a cold in your back.

This discomfort should be relieved by your pain medication. All refill requests must be called to the office by 2 p.m. for same day refills. Calls received after 2 p.m. will be called to your pharmacy on the next business day. Our surgeons will not refill pain medication over the weekend. Please check your medication supply prior to 2 p.m. on Friday.

### **Please Notify Your Doctor If:**

- You have difficulty breathing.
- You develop angina or the same type of discomfort you had before surgery.
- You may take Nitroglycerin for angina if you have it, but still notify your cardiologist. Office Follow-Up

After you are discharged from the hospital, please call your physicians for the following post-operative appointments:

- Ask your family doctor when he/she would like to see you.
- Make an appointment with your cardiologist for two (2) weeks after surgery.
- Make an appointment with your surgeon for four (4) weeks after surgery.

**Please make your post-operative appointments immediately following discharge from the hospital.**

### **Our main office address is:**

1520 S. Main Street  
Suite 3  
Dayton, Ohio 45409  
(937) 208-7240

### **Our satellite office address is:**

**Atrium Medical Center**  
Professional Office Building  
200 Medical Center Drive, Suite 180  
Middletown, Ohio 45005  
(513) 424-6565

**Please indicate which office location you prefer when scheduling your appointment.**

Our office hours are Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 5p.m.

To contact the answering service, please call 1-877-501-4766

**Note: Please bring a list of your current medications to our office at the time of your appointment.**

*Due to unforeseen schedule changes, we ask you call our office the morning of your appointment for verification of your appointment time.*

*We ask that you please actively follow these instructions after you are discharged from the hospital. If you have any questions regarding these instructions, please call our office at (937) 208-7240.*