

## AFTER CORONARY ARTERY BYPASS SURGERY

Your doctor performed coronary artery bypass graft surgery (also called CABG, pronounced “cabbage”). This surgery created new pathways around blocked parts of your heart’s blood vessels, allowing blood to reach your heart muscle. Your doctor used a healthy blood vessel from another part of your body (a graft) to restore blood flow.

### Activity

- Discuss with your doctor what you can and can’t do as you recover. You will have good and bad days; this is normal. Tell your doctor if you feel depressed, have trouble sleeping, or have a persistent decrease in appetite. Although these problems are common after surgery, they can slow your recovery. It’s important to seek help.
- Let others drive you wherever you need to go for the first 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Ask someone to stand nearby while you shower or do other activities, just in case you need help.
- Avoid using very hot water while showering. It can affect your circulation and make you dizzy.
- Weigh yourself every day, at the same time of day, and in the same kind of clothes. Quick weight gain can be a sign of a problem that needs your doctor’s attention.
- You may start doing light work around the house and yard after 2 to 3 weeks at home. Don’t lift anything heavier than five (5) pounds. Until approved by your doctor, avoid mowing the lawn, vacuuming, driving, and doing other activities that could strain your breastbone.
- Ask your doctor when you can expect to return to work.

### Pain Relief

You will recover faster after surgery if your pain is kept under control:

- Don’t be surprised if you feel sharp pains as your breastbone heals or if you have soreness in your incision during changes in weather.
- Tell your doctor if you have questions about what you’re feeling, if your medications don’t reduce your pain, or if you suddenly feel worse.

### Incision Care

Healing takes several weeks. The bandage or dressing on your chest will likely be removed before you go home. If it is still in place, ask your nurse how you should care for it after you return home. Do the following to care for your incision:

- If there are any steri-strips still on your incision, you can remove them after a week if they haven't already fallen off.
- Clean your incision every day with soap and water.

- Gently pat the area of the incision to dry it.
- Don't use any powders, lotions, or oils on your incision until it is well healed.

### Lifestyle Changes

- Ask your doctor when you can start a walking program:
  - If you haven't already started a walking program in the hospital, begin with short walks (about 5 minutes) at home. Go a little longer each day.
  - Choose a safe place with a level surface, such as a local park or mall.
  - Wear supportive shoes to prevent injury to your knees and ankles.
  - Walk with someone. It's more fun and helps you stay with it.
- Take your medications exactly as directed. Don't skip doses even if you are feeling better.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Get help to lose any extra pounds.
- Cut back on salt:
  - Limit canned, dried, packaged, and fast foods.
  - Don't add salt to your food at the table.
  - Season foods with herbs instead of salt when you cook.
- Break the smoking habit. Enroll in a smoking cessation program to improve your chances of success.

### When to Call Your Doctor

Call your doctor immediately if you have any of the following:

- Chest pain or a return of the heart symptoms you had before your surgery
- Fever above 100°F (37.8°C)
- Signs of infection (redness, swelling, drainage, or warmth) at the incision site
- Shortness of breath
- Fainting
- Weight gain of more than 3 pounds in 1 day, more than 5 pounds in 1 week, or whatever weight gain you were told to report by your doctor
- New or increased swelling in your hands, feet, or ankles
- Unrelieved pain at the incision site(s)
- Changes in the location, type, or severity of pain
- Fast or irregular pulse
- Any unusual bleeding.