

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
- You will be prescribed Tylenol to be taken regularly to help with your pain and will help in decreasing the amount of opioid pain medication needed. Take the prescribed opioid pain medication as needed to keep your pain manageable
- 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 opioid pain medication. Take 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 your pain management
- 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 from the incision
- Sudden shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Chest pain