

Heart Surgery: Breathing Exercises

After heart surgery it is important that you take an active role in your recovery. One way to do this is to perform breathing exercises like Incentive Spirometry and Controlled Coughing. These breathing exercises help strengthen your lungs and prevent lung infections like Pneumonia. Perform these exercises as directed but expect to do them about ten times every one to two hours.

Incentive Spirometry is a lung exercise that helps you breathe easier by helping you breathe deeper. Use an incentive spirometer and take slow deep breaths.

“Incentive spirometry is something that just kind of helps to keep your lungs open and working well.”

“At first you can’t do it a lot but then days go by and you see the line goes up and higher and higher until you finally meet your goal.”

Your healthcare team will set goals for you and will monitor your progress. To use an Incentive Spirometer: set the indicator on the outside of the spirometer to the level your Cardiac care team has recommended for you. Sit up as straight as you can. Breathe out and put the mouthpiece in your mouth. Take a breath in slowly. Try to keep the marker near the indicator on the outside of the spirometer.

Hold your breath for two to 5 seconds and let the marker fall slowly back down to the bottom of the spirometer. Breathe out. Perform this routine as often as your Cardiac care team tells you to. As your breathing and lungs improve, your cardiac care team may set new goals. Simply move the indicator on the outside of the spirometer to your new goal level and continue to exercise your lungs.

“It’s going to cause some pain when you cough so we give you this pillow and you hug it when you cough, and it will splint your chest make it a little easier.”