
After Coronary Artery Bypass Surgery

You had a coronary artery bypass graft surgery (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 healthcare provider used a healthy blood vessel from another part of your body (a graft) to restore blood flow.

Activity

- Discuss with your healthcare provider what you can and can’t do as you recover. You will have good and bad days. This is normal. But tell your healthcare provider 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.
- Don’t use 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. A good way to do this is to weigh yourself in the morning when you first get out of bed and after peeing. Quick weight gain can be a sign of a problem that needs your healthcare provider’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 5 pounds. Your healthcare provider may give you a more specific weight restriction. Until approved by your healthcare provider, don’t mow the lawn, vacuum, drive, lift heavy items, or do other activities that could strain your breastbone.
- Ask your healthcare provider when you can expect to return to work. It often depends on the type of work you do.
- Your provider may refer you to a cardiac rehab program. Cardiac rehab is a medically supervised program. It’s designed to help your heart recover and your ability to function. It prepares you for future daily activities. It’s overseen by a cardiac doctor and a team of cardiac health providers. Your program may last from 6 weeks to more than a year. The goal of cardiac rehab is to help ease your symptoms and make your heart as healthy as possible. Your program may include exercise, classes on quitting smoking, nutrition information, counseling, stress management, and occupational therapy. In some cases, you may be able to do this at home. Ask your provider if a cardiac rehab program would help you.



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 healthcare provider if you have questions about what you're feeling, if your medicines 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's still in place, ask your healthcare provider how you should care for it after you return home. Do the following to care for your incision:

- If there are any adhesive skin closures still on your incision, ask your provider when you can remove them. They may fall off on their own after a week.
- Clean your incision every day with soap and running water.
- Gently pat the area of the incision to dry it.
- Don't use any powders, lotions, ointments, or oils on your incision until it's well healed, unless your provider tells you to do so.
- Using a cool pack can reduce soreness and itching. Itching is common as the incision heals. Ask your provider how to safely use a cool pack.

Lifestyle changes

- Ask your healthcare provider when you can start a walking program:
 - If you haven't already started a walking program in the hospital, start 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 medicines exactly as directed. Don't skip doses.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Get help to lose any extra pounds.
- Avoid fatty and fried foods. Stick to lean meats, such as chicken or fish.
- 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 stop-smoking program to improve your chances of success.

When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider immediately if you have any of the following:

- Chest pain or a return of the heart symptoms you had before your surgery
- Fever of 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Signs of infection (redness, swelling, drainage, foul smelling odor, or warmth) at the incision site.
- Weight gain of more than 2 pounds in 1 day, more than 5 pounds in 1 week, or whatever weight gain you were told to report by your healthcare provider
- New or increased swelling in your hands, feet, or ankles
- Unrelieved pain at the incision site(s)
- Fast, slow, or irregular pulse that resolves promptly
- Persistent abdominal pain
- Nausea, vomiting, or constipation
- Trouble urinating
- Bleeding that is controlled with pressure or that stops on its own

Call 911

Call 911 if any of the following occur:

- New, unusual, or worsening chest pain
- Pain that is typical for your angina and doesn't go away promptly with medicine or rest
- New, unusual, or worsening chest pain

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- New, unusual, or worsening difficulty breathing
 - Uncontrollable bleeding from a wound
 - Dizziness or faintness that doesn't go away promptly with sitting or lying down
 - Persistent unusually fast, slow, or irregular pulse