
After Heart Valve Surgery (Child)

A health care provider did surgery to fix or replace one or more of your child's heart valves. The heart valves make sure that blood flows through the heart the right way. Your child had the surgery to improve this blood flow. The surgery should reduce or stop the problems your child was having. Here's what you need to know after the surgery.

Activity

- Ask the health care provider what your child can and can't do as they recover. Your child will have good and bad days. This is normal.
- Don't let your child strain to lift any heavy objects until approved by the provider.
- While your child is healing, stay nearby during showers or other activities, just in case they need help.
- Until the provider says it's okay, don't let your child do activities that could strain the breastbone. This includes sports.
- Ask the provider when your child can return to daycare or school.
- Ask the provider when your child can start a walking program or return to regular play.
 - Begin with a short playtime (about 5 minutes). Go a little longer each day.
 - Choose a safe place with a level surface.
 - Arrange for your child to play with someone. It's more fun and helps your child forget about pain.

Talk with your child's health care provider about what problems to look for and when to contact them. Know how to contact them with any questions or problems, including after office hours, on weekends, and on holidays.

Other home care

- Gently clean your child's incision every day with soap and water. Gently pat dry the incision area. Unless told to by your health care provider, don't use any powders, lotions, antibiotic creams, or oils on the incision until it is well healed. This may take a few weeks.
- Be careful that the water is not too hot when your child is showering or bathing. Hot water can affect circulation and cause dizziness.
- Weigh your child every day, at the same time of day, and in the same kind of clothes. Report weight gain to the provider.
- Give your child all prescribed medicines exactly as directed.
- Keep your child away from people who are sick. This is especially important in the first week. Make sure your child uses good handwashing methods. This is to prevent the spread of infection.

- Put off any routine dental appointments for your child for some time. Talk with your child's provider about how long. Ask the provider if your child needs antibiotics before dental procedures.
- Your child's appetite may be poor for a while. Let your child eat what they want. But limit the amount of salt. Follow your provider's directions on how much fluid your child should have.

When to contact your child's doctor

Contact your child's health care provider right away if any of the following occur:

- Fever above 100.4°F (38°C) or higher, or as directed by the provider.
- Signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, drainage, bad odor, or warmth at the incision site.
- Constant vomiting.
- Belly pain.
- Slight bleeding, or bleeding that quickly stops.
- New or increased fluid buildup. This might be swollen hands, ankles, or feet, or a puffy face.
- Pain that doesn't get better after taking medicine.
- Changes in the location, type, or level of pain.
- Pain at the incision site that doesn't get better after taking medicine.
- Breastbone popping or clicking.
- Your child doesn't seem to be getting better.

Call 911

Call 911 if any of the following occur:

- Fainting
- New or different chest pain or shortness of breath
- Heavy bleeding, or bleeding that is not quickly controlled
- Fast or irregular pulse
- Trouble breathing