



# Heart Surgery

## Your follow-up care

*This handout explains follow-up care after having heart surgery at University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC).*

Patient: \_\_\_\_\_

Surgery: \_\_\_\_\_

Surgery date: \_\_\_\_\_

### Your Cardiac Surgery Team and Follow-up Visit

Surgeon: \_\_\_\_\_

Cardiac Surgery clinic nurse:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name Phone Number

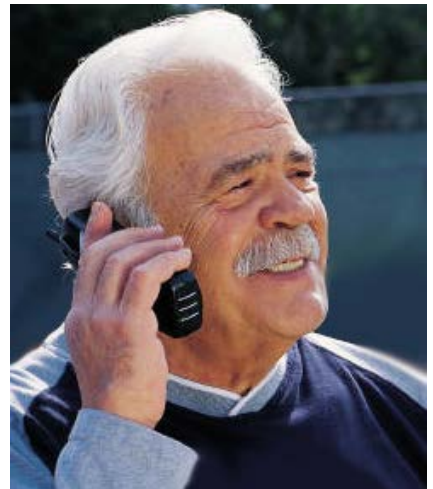
Follow-up visit: \_\_\_\_\_  
Day and Date Time

### When to Call

For **urgent concerns or symptoms** after hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Cardiac Surgery provider on call.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., call your Cardiac Surgery clinic nurse at the number written above if you have any of these symptoms:

- Fever higher than 101°F (38.5°C)
- More redness, swelling, or tenderness around your incision
- An opening in your incision or drainage from the site
- Blood pressure higher than 140/90, or lower than 90/60 (or as your provider has advised)



*Call your Cardiac Surgery clinic nurse if you have questions or concerns.*



You will have your follow-up visit at the Heart Institute at UWMC about 1 to 2 weeks after your surgery.

**Write down questions to ask your team at your follow-up visit:**

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- Resting heart rate either less than 60 beats a minute, or more than 100 beats a minute (or as your provider has advised)
- Breathing changes or problems breathing
- New *palpitations* (irregular heart beat) or skipped beats
- Return of chest pain or other symptoms you had before surgery
- Weight gain of 3 pounds or more within 5 days
- Increased swelling in your feet or ankles
- Feeling sick to your stomach, feeling nauseated, or vomiting
- Trouble taking your medicine

### Self-care

- Shower every day. Gently wash your incision with soap and water. Pat dry with a clean towel.
- Keep track of your weight, temperature, resting heart rate, blood pressure, and how your incision looks. Record these numbers on the “Daily Record” chart on pages 5 and 6 of this handout.
- Walk 4 times a day. Use the “Exercise Log” on pages 7 and 8 of this handout to track your daily activity.
- Call the Cardiac Surgery Team if you feel “popping” or “clicking” in your chest.

### Follow-up Visits at the Heart Institute at UWMC

The Cardiac Surgery Team will monitor your heart care during the first 30 days after surgery. The Cardiac Surgery Team includes your surgeon, Cardiac Surgery advanced practice providers (APPs), and Cardiac Surgery clinic nurses.

You will need to see your surgeon or APP about 1 to 2 weeks after surgery. This visit will be at the Heart Institute at UW Medical Center, 1959 N.E. Pacific St., Seattle, WA 98195.

At this visit, your surgeon or APP will assess your healing and progress. This follow-up visit is usually scheduled before you leave the hospital.

**If you do not have a follow-up appointment or need to reschedule:** Call your Cardiac Surgery clinic nurse at 206.598.4300 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

## What to Bring

Bring these items to your follow-up visit:

- Bottles of all the medicines you are currently taking
- Your “Daily Record” and “Exercise Log” from this handout
- A list of questions you want to ask your Cardiac Surgery Team (use the space at left for your list)

## Regular Follow-up Visits

After your follow-up visit, you may not need to see the Cardiac Surgery Team again. But, please call us if you have any questions or concerns during the first 30 days after your surgery.

About 30 days after your surgery, your *cardiologist* or primary care provider (PCP) will start to manage your medicines. A cardiologist is a doctor with special training and skill in finding, treating, and preventing diseases of the heart and blood vessels.

It is important to have regular follow-ups with your cardiologist after heart surgery. You will need to see a cardiologist for:

- After-surgery checkup
- Reducing your risk of heart problems
- Ongoing care for issues such as high blood pressure or heart failure

**If you do not have a cardiologist:** Ask your Cardiac Surgery Care Team, PCP, or insurance company to help you find a cardiologist in your area.

## Your Diet After Heart Surgery

It is common to have a lower appetite after heart surgery. But it is important to eat nutritious foods to help your body heal. Follow this recovery diet for best healing:

- **Eat plenty of protein.** Protein helps with wound healing. Foods high in protein include fish, chicken, dried beans, legumes, cheese, milk, yogurt, and eggs. You can also drink a protein drink like Boost or make protein shakes to meet your protein needs.
- **Eat lots of fiber and drink fluids** to keep from getting constipated. Foods with fiber include fruits, vegetables, and whole grains.



We strongly advise you to quit smoking, vaping, or using any products that contain nicotine.

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., call your Cardiac Surgery nurse at the number written on page 1 of this handout.

Cardiac Surgery clinic fax:  
206.598.2414

Send non-urgent emails to your care team through eCare:  
<https://ecare.uwmedicine.org>

- **Eat a diet that is low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and trans-fatty acid.** Cook with olive, canola, vegetable, or grapeseed oil. Avoid processed foods.
- **Cut out added sugars** that are found in products like soda, candy, and pastries. Limit breads, rice, and potatoes. Extra sugar in the body is turned into fat. This causes weight gain, raises triglyceride, lowers HDL levels, and slows healing.
- If you are on a special diet, follow your doctor's instructions.

### If You Have Diabetes or High Blood Sugar

- Eat the diet that is advised by the American Diabetes Association (ADA), unless your doctor tells you otherwise.
- Record your blood sugar levels before meals and at bedtime.
- Keep your blood sugar levels as close to normal as you can.

### If Your Incision Is in the Center of Your Chest

Follow these precautions after your surgery:

- For **6 weeks**: Do **not** lift, pull, or push anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. (A gallon of water weighs almost 9 pounds.)
- For **12 weeks**: Do **not** do any activities that may stress or twist your *sternum* (breastbone). This includes activities such as riding a bike, batting, golfing, tennis, or bowling.
- For **at least 6 weeks**: Do **not** drive for at least 6 weeks, or until your surgeon says it is OK. Ask your Cardiac Surgery Team when you can drive again.

### Sexual Activity

You may resume sexual activity when you feel OK doing so. But, take extra care to protect your incision. Follow the precautions given above.

### If You Use Nicotine Products

Nicotine reduces blood flow to your tissues. This makes it hard for your wound to heal.

If you smoke, vape, or use tobacco of any kind, **we strongly advise you to quit**. If you need help, talk with your PCP or someone on your healthcare team at UWMC.

## Daily Record

Use this chart to record your weight, temperature, resting heart rate, blood pressure, and how your incision looks. Be sure to:

- Weigh yourself at the same time and with the same scale every day.
- Check your blood pressure and heart rate once a day, **2 hours after** you take your morning medicines.

Date	Weight	Temperature	Heart Rate at Rest	Blood Pressure	How Your Incision Looks



# Exercise Log

Date	Type of Exercise	How Long You Exercised	Your Pace (slow, moderate, strenuous)	Resting Heart Rate	Heart Rate After Exercise

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