Post-Surgical Activity Home Program

As you recover, you will need to balance your activity, exercise, and rest. Your breast bone (sternum) will take several months to completely heal. During this time, please follow these guidelines in your activity choices.

**Arm work**
It’s best to do activities that use both arms equally. One-sided movements like vacuuming, scrubbing, and raking put more strain on the sternum. Avoid this kind of activity until ________________.

**Stretching Exercises**
Stretching exercises for your upper body are included in your exercise program. Stretching must be done regularly – it may take 6 months to a year before your chest feels back to normal. Stretching will keep your shoulder and muscles flexible and shorten the time that you feel discomfort in these muscles. Repeat each stretch 5 times slowly, 4 times a day. Remember:
- Never hold your breath while stretching
- Stop if you feel any pain.

**Driving**
Avoid driving for 2 weeks from the day of discharge or until your doctor permits.

**Lifting, Pushing, Pulling**
Avoid lifting, pushing, and pulling any object heavier than _____ pounds for _____ weeks. On _____, (____ weeks after your surgery) you may gradually begin lifting heavier objects.

**Isometrics**
Isometric activities involve continuous muscle tension. Avoid activities that involve straining and holding your breath.

**Stair climbing**
You may climb stairs after discharge when you need to. Take them slowly, and avoid carrying objects up and down stairs.

**Sexual activity**
Resuming sexual activity may cause some anxiety. It’s important for you and your partner to talk openly during this time. A general guideline is if you can walk up and down 24 steps you should have the physical stamina for sexual activity. Start slowly and use positions that feel comfortable.

**Going back to work**
Ask your doctor about this. Jobs that involve more intense physical activity will require a longer period away from work.

**Personal energy saving tips**
These tips can help you use your energy wisely:

**Think**
- Pace yourself – faster takes more energy.
- Rest before you are really tired.
- Sit to save energy during long tasks.
- Balance your day, alternate light and heavy activities.

**Organize your day**
- Plan ahead and be realistic.
- Eliminate unnecessary tasks.
- Delegate when possible and accept offers to help.

**The golden rule**
Listen to your body! If you feel tired, dizzy, lightheaded, short of breath, or have chest discomfort, stop what you are doing and rest.
What activities can you do?
Your activity is restricted while you recover from surgery. Taking part in outpatient cardiac rehabilitation after discharge will help guide you in returning to your previous activity level. The following activities are light to moderate and will be allowed after discharge.

Listed below are light to moderate activities that are allowed after discharge:

Personal care
• Washing hands, face and hair, brushing teeth
• Shower
• Dressing

Household tasks
• Light meal preparation
• Grocery shopping and putting groceries away (avoid heavy lifting, do not carry upstairs)
• Loading and unloading dishwasher, wash machine and dryer
• Light cleaning – dusting, straightening up, straightening bed, sweeping, washing dishes, dust mopping
• Ironing, folding laundry

Recreational activities/exercise
• Reading, board games (cards, checkers, puzzles), needlework (sewing, knitting)
• Computer work
• Golf – putting and chipping only
• Fishing from boat, bank, or dock
• Slow dancing
• Walking
• Water aerobics
• Stationary biking

Social activities
Visiting, shopping, or going to a religious service, movie, concert or sporting event

Listed below are heavy activities that require more effort. Avoid these activities for _____ weeks after surgery (_____________) unless your doctor okays them:

Household tasks
• Scrubbing floors on hands and knees
• Mopping the floor
• Vacuuming
• Moving or pushing furniture
• Changing bed sheets

Yard work and home repairs
• Cutting the grass with a power mower
• Riding a lawn mower
• Snow removal and snow blower
• Raking, spading, hoeing
• Pulling a garden hose
• Carpentry or construction
• Painting large areas
• Climbing a ladder
• Changing storm windows and screens
• Chopping wood or splitting logs
• Heavier cleaning activities such as clearing out the garage

Recreational activities/exercise
• Golf, tennis, bowling
• Volleyball, basketball, football
• Vigorous dancing
• Hiking, swimming, horseback riding, hunting
• Jogging
• Running
• Tennis
• Cycling

Need more information?
These pages contain general guidelines and examples of common activities. Please ask your doctor or cardiac rehab clinician:
• If you are unsure of what you can do
• If you have questions about activities not listed here