

## **At Home After Open Heart Surgery**

### **A Guide for Patients in the Home**

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### **Returning to Normal Activity**

The time it takes to return to a normal activity level varies based on your age, energy level and prior state of health and fitness.

🏠 Your top priorities are:

- Getting dressed
- Eating a healthy diet
- Your walking program

### **Rest and Activity times should be well balanced.**

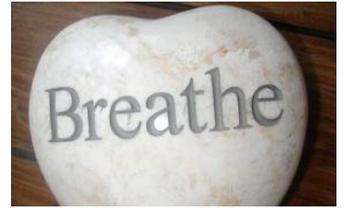
🏠 Energy Saving Tips: (All “on your feet” activity is work for your heart.)

- Pace yourself. Allow plenty of time to finish your task. Do not rush.
- Slow down and rest if talking becomes difficult.
- Plan your day so you do not have to climb stairs unnecessarily.
- Take rest periods during your activities.
- Do not do more in a day than your body tells you can.
- Avoid long sleep periods during the day.
- Short naps are okay.
- Avoid sitting for longer than 1-1 ½ hours (e.g., long distance traveling, TV, computers). Get up and walk around to help your leg circulation and prevent blood clots.



## Protecting Your Sternum (Breast Bone): Your breast bone takes 8-12 weeks to heal.

- 🏠 Do not lift, push, or pull more than 5-8 pounds, such as lifting groceries, small children, pets, etc.
- 🏠 Continue to use your incentive spirometer and breathing exercises until you have reached your pre-operative level.
- 🏠 A shower chair and handheld showerhead will make it easier to shower without stressing the sternum.
- 🏠 Avoid using only one arm and activities reaching behind your back.
- 🏠 Sustained arm activities above shoulder level place extra stress on your heart and sternum (e.g., vacuuming).



### Other Considerations:

- 🏠 Heavy straining or breath holding (i.e., bowel movements) can cause a great strain on the heart. Use stool softeners or laxatives if necessary to prevent constipation.
- 🏠 Hot and cold weather and windy conditions may raise your heart rate and make you tire more easily. Slow down your pace and dress appropriately.
- 🏠 Wear a scarf around your mouth and nose to warm the air before it reaches your lungs.
- 🏠 On hot days exercise during the coolest part of the day.
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