



## **A GUIDE TO ENHANCING YOUR RECOVERY AFTER CARDIAC SURGERY**

This pamphlet is part of the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) program at MGH. ERAS is a standard practice for all surgical patients in the Mass General Brigham System and affiliated hospitals.

The included information is designed to help you understand and prepare for your surgery. Please review and ask any questions of your surgical team prior to the surgery.

ERAS is designed to keep you actively involved in your recovery prior to and after your surgery, with the overall goal for you to have a better surgical experience and get back to normal as soon as possible.

Each stage of this program is tailored to minimize your pain, avoid complications, allow for earlier resumption of food and activity, improve your recovery after surgery, and reduce the number of days you need to stay in the hospital.

Together, with your help, we can achieve these goals!

**Your Surgeon's Name:**

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**Our Office Phone #:            617-724-0800**

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## HOW YOU CAN HELP

### WEEKS BEFORE SURGERY

- Continue or consider starting a daily **relaxation and stress management practice**, which is known to boost the body's immunity and aid in recovery. This may include exercise, meditation, yoga, and others.
- **Eat** a mixed healthy diet which can include fruits, vegetables, whole grains and low-fat protein sources.
- It is strongly suggested that you **stop smoking completely and stop drinking alcohol** at least 4 weeks before your surgery. This will reduce the chances of complications during and after surgery and improve your recovery. If you would like more information on how to quit smoking or drinking, speak to your doctor, nurse, or pharmacist.
- **Plan ahead.** Arrange for someone to accompany you at the time of admission and at the time of discharge. Make prior preparations at home for your arrival after surgery. Make sure there is enough food and supplies. You should be able to walk and eat and care for yourself, but you may need some extra assistance initially from family or friends, especially to avoid strenuous tasks like laundry, cleaning, and grocery shopping immediately after your surgery.

### PREOPERATIVE APPOINTMENT

- You will be seen for preoperative visit in the cardiac surgery clinic with one of the Nurse Practitioners and at that appointment we will review further details with you including:
  - Physical exam and vital signs.
  - Updating your medical and surgical history.
  - Reviewing medications and providing instructions on holding any if applicable.
  - Providing instructions for leading up to surgery including a Chlorhexidine body wash prior to surgery to clean your skin.
  - Giving you information about what to bring and what to anticipate while you are in the hospital.
  - Sternal precautions which entail limitations in your arm movements and how much you lift for 6 weeks after surgery to allow your incision to heal well.
  - Incentive spirometer which is a breathing tool to help expand your lungs and prevent complications such as pneumonia.
  - Discussing what to expect after you are discharged from the hospital.
- We will be obtaining additional routine preoperative testing at this visit including blood work, urine sample, chest x-ray, EKG and a nasal swab that checks for bacteria in your nose. You will receive feedback if any concerning findings and additional instructions if you have bacteria in your nose.

## 2 WEEKS BEFORE SURGERY

- **Stop** all herbal supplements, including fish oil/omega 3, CoQ10, glucosamine/chondroitin, ginger, garlic, ginkgo, Vitamin E.

## 7 DAYS BEFORE SURGERY

- **Stop NSAIDS**, unless your surgeon has advised otherwise. This includes, but is not limited to, ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve, Anaprox, Naprosyn), and celecoxib (Celebrex).
- **Inform your surgeon** if you take Xarelto, Coumadin, Plavix, Eliquis, or any other anticoagulants.

(We will discuss all your medications in detail at your preoperative visit and give you further instructions if indicated.)

## 2 DAYS BEFORE SURGERY

- Chlorhexidine body wash (see last page for instructions).
- If you were tested for STAPH are positive, defer to instructions provided by your surgeon's office for the use of Chlorhexidine wash and mupirocin nasal ointment. Your doctor will let you know if you need additional testing.

## 1 DAY BEFORE SURGERY

- Chlorhexidine body wash (see last page for instructions).
- **Avoid** consumption of alcohol at least 24 hours (ideally, a month) before surgery.
- **Avoid** fried and spicy food.
- OK to eat breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

### Nothing to eat after 10PM

- **After 10 PM, OK to drink WATER ONLY until you leave for the hospital in the morning.**

## DAY OF SURGERY

- Chlorhexidine body wash in the morning (see below for instructions).
- You may have **WATER ONLY** until you leave your house.
- Take any permitted medications with 1-2 sips of water. You will be given instructions on what medications to take during your preoperative visit.
- If you use a CPAP, please bring machine, mask and hoses to hospital.
- **If you have diabetes** and your blood sugar is low or you start to feel symptoms of low blood sugar, drink a clear liquid with sugar, such as apple juice.  
(No Orange Juice).

## AFTER SURGERY

- Patients typically spend ~1-2 nights on average in the Cardiac Surgery Intensive Care Unit.
- The rest of your hospital stay, ~5-7 days total on average, will be on the Cardiac Surgery Step Down Unit which will focus on:
  - Getting you up and walking.
  - Using your incentive spirometer.
  - Implementing sternal precautions to protect your incision.
  - Adjusting medications to prepare you for discharge.
- Details will be discussed at your preoperative visit and you will receive discharge instructions before leaving the hospital.

## AFTER DISCHARGE

- Please make sure you have follow-up appointments with your Primary Care Doctor and Cardiologist, ideally within 1 month or sooner after surgery.
- It is common for energy level to be low, appetite/taste to be off, sleep schedule to be irregular and to have muscle discomfort around your incision initially after cardiac surgery; generally, this improves week by week.
- It is good to be walking when you are home but pace yourself and allow periods of rest.
- Continue sternal precautions for 6 weeks after surgery.
- You will have a postoperative visit with the Nurse Practitioner ~4-6 weeks after surgery and progression of activity will be reviewed then.
- It is important that you call our office or send message through patient gateway in the interim with any recovery concerns including but not limited to:
  - weight gain,
  - increasing shortness of breath or shortness of breath when lying down,
  - swelling in your legs,
  - palpitations,
  - fevers or signs of infection at your incision such as redness,
  - drainage or open areas

**Our office number: 617-724-0800**

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR SHOWER WITH CHLORHEXIDINE

Shower or bathe daily and thoroughly with Chlorhexidine wash to help prevent infections after surgery:

1. Starting 2 days before, the day before, and on the morning of surgery (i.e., once daily for 3 days) per the special instructions included for bathing with Chlorhexidine, an antimicrobial soap.
  2. If you were tested for STAPH and are positive, defer to instructions provided by your surgeon's office for the use of Chlorhexidine wash and mupirocin nasal ointment. Your doctor will let you know if you need additional testing.
- Use the Chlorhexidine instead of your regular soap. Do Not Use Both.
  - **Do not** use if you are allergic to Chlorhexidine. If you are allergic or develop a rash or skin irritation, please contact your physician about using an antibacterial soap instead.
  - **Do not** use Chlorhexidine on your face, head, or genitals.
  - **Avoid** shaving the chest, abdomen, or groin area.
  - **Shampoo/condition** your hair as you normally do prior to washing with Chlorhexidine.
  - **Do not** apply powder, lotion, deodorant, or hair products after the third shower (on the day of surgery).

### Chlorhexidine shower instructions

1. Rinse your body thoroughly with water.
2. Turn the water off to prevent rinsing the Chlorhexidine wash off too soon.
3. Wash from the neck downwards. Be especially careful to wash the chest, abdomen, and legs.
4. Wash your body gently for 5 minutes. Can use clean sponge or facecloth to help lather.
5. Allow the Chlorhexidine to dry on your skin for 1 minute before rinsing off.
6. Turn water back on, rinse well, and pat dry with a clean towel.