



CARING FOR YOUR CHILD AFTER HEART SURGERY

Incision:

- Keep the incision clean and gently wash with soap and water every day. If there is any tape (i.e. steri-strips), it will come off on its own.
- Increasing redness, swelling, pain, or drainage are NOT normal. If you see any of these changes, please call the heart surgeon at (210) 562-5378.
- Lotions such as vitamin E oil, aloe Vera, coco butter, mineral oil, are not necessary, but may be applied 3 weeks after surgery.
- A tub or shower may be taken the day after discharge from the hospital when the wound is healed.
- After the incision is healed, sunscreen should be used when the child is out in the sun. It is preferable that the child keep a shirt on for the first 3 months when outside.
- Itching is a normal sign of healing. Keep the incision clean and keep a shirt over the area while it is healing to prevent scratching.

Diet:

- After surgery, your child's appetite should return to normal within 1 month.
- Your child may return to his or her regular diet unless your doctor orders a special diet.

Activities:

1. For 1 month, avoid any activities that might cause harm to the chest.
2. No "rough playing", bike riding, swimming, wrestling, skateboarding, or contact sports (i.e. soccer, basketball, football, gymnastics, etc) for 1 month.
3. Always have your child use a seat belt when traveling in a car.
4. When possible avoid sick people and crowded places (i.e. stores, restaurants, church, movie theaters, etc.) for at least two weeks after going home.

Behavior:

- Your child's behavior may change for awhile after surgery. He or she may be fussy, have bad dreams or night terrors, or show an increase in "childish ways."
- Other children in the home may also show changes in behavior or schoolwork. Setting aside some time with each child may help

School:

- Ask your child's cardiologist when he/she can return to school.
- Typically your child may return to school about 2-4 weeks after going home.
- Also ask your child's cardiologist when your child may return to gym or P.E. class.

Endocarditis Prevention:

1. Always check with your cardiologist before any surgery.
2. Dental care is very important. When your child has his or her teeth cleaned or has any dental work, germs from the mouth may get into the blood. This could result in an infection of the heart. To prevent this, the doctor or dentist should order an antibiotic for your child to take prior to any dental cleaning, check-up or dental work.
3. If your child requires any surgery, he or she may need antibiotics.

When to call the Doctor:

1. Call the heart surgeon immediately at (210) 562-5378 if there is an increase in redness, swelling, pain, or drainage from the incision.
2. Call the cardiologist if you notice your child:
 - Breathes faster than usual, has trouble breathing, or gets short of breath
 - Eats poorly
 - Is very fussy, lethargic or tires more quickly
 - Has swollen or puffy hands, or feet.
 - Is more blue (more cyanotic) or more pale than normal
 - Feels dizzy, faints or falls down for no reason
 - Has chest pain
 - Has a fever higher than 101.5 Fahrenheit or 38.5 Centigrade
 - Vomits or has diarrhea often or lasting more than 12 hours

Appointments: Made at discharge.

It is extremely important that you make an appointment to see the following doctors:

One week after discharge: Surgeon (heart surgery team): (210) 562-5378.

One week after discharge: Cardiologist.

Two weeks after discharge: Pediatrician.

Questions or Problems?

If you have any question or problems, please call your heart surgeon at (210) 562-5378 or your child's cardiologist.