

This *Post-Discharge Patient Pathway* is based on the *average path* a patient travels during their recovery after open heart surgery and will not pertain to all patients.

	1–2 Days	1–2 Weeks	4–6 Weeks	Post Care
Social Work	If you were to receive Visiting Nurse Services (VNS) upon discharge and they did not contact you the day after your discharge, call your hospital social worker as soon as possible at 212-305-2553.			Attend the <i>Heart of Hearts Open Heart Education and Support Group</i> —the second Tuesday of every month from 4–6 pm, on 7HS, Room 213. This group is open to patients and their families and friends.
Sleeping	Go to bed at the same time each night. Avoid excessive napping during the day.	Try to maintain 6–8 hours of sleep each night.	Maintain 6–8 hours a night.	Maintain 6–8 hours a night.
Showering	You may shower (no baths). Avoid direct streams of water on your incision. Place a chair or stool in the shower with you or have someone assist you in case you get tired. (Only use a bathtub or shower proof chair with rubber tips.)	No baths.	You may take a bath if all wounds are closed and without drainage. Check with your PA/surgeon before doing so.	
Weight	Weigh yourself daily. If you gain 2–3 lbs in a day, or 3–5 lbs in a week, call your cardiologist.	Continue to weigh yourself daily. Keep a daily chart of your weight and take it with you to your appointment with your cardiologist.		
Temperature	If you feel warm or chilled, take your temperature 3 times a day (morning, afternoon and evening). Call your cardiologist if it exceeds 101 degrees.	If you feel warm or chilled, take your temperature. Low grade temperatures less than 100 degrees are normal.		
Nutrition	You may have a loss of appetite or feel too tired to eat. This is common but you need nourishment to enable your body to heal. Do not restrict yourself if your appetite is poor. Adequate calories and protein are most important. Drink adequate fluids.	Eat 5–6 small meals a day instead of 3 large ones. Eat even if you do not feel hungry.	Maintain a balanced diet that contains a wide variety of foods from the five food groups— 1. Grains 2. Fruits 3. Vegetables 4. Dairy 5. Meat/poultry/fish	A heart healthy diet is: • Low in saturated fat and cholesterol • Limited in total fat • Limited in sodium or salt For more information about heart healthy diets, contact the <i>American Dietetic Association (ADA)</i> at 800-877-1600.
Medication	Take all medications as directed. If you are on Coumadin® you will need to have multiple Coumadin® blood checks each week by your cardiologist.	Do not change the dosage of your medication without your doctor’s approval. Multiple Coumadin® blood checks by your cardiologist.	Keep a list of your medications and the dosages in your wallet or purse. Continue Coumadin® checks	If you had a valve repair or replacement, tell your health care providers. Antibiotics are still needed before having dental work or other invasive procedures.
Activities	Plan your day during breakfast to help you from getting too tired. You may find the smallest items hard to lift without straining your chest. Do not lift more than 5-10 pounds.	As you feel stronger you may go out and increase your activity. Keep activities to about an hour.	Feel free to resume sexual activity as soon as you feel able. Until your sternum has healed (approximately 6 weeks), do not put pressure on your arms or breastbone.	Contact your cardiologist before beginning more strenuous activities such as golf and swimming.
Exercise	You may climb stairs, but do so at your own pace—rest when needed. Do not pull yourself up with your arms.	Continue walking according to the walking program provided by your physical therapist. Discuss with your local cardiologist the possibility of out-patient cardiac rehabilitation.	One month after surgery, you may be able to walk at least 1 to 1.5 miles/day (approximately 30 minutes).	Do general postural exercises provided by physical therapist. Continue exercise program.
Wound Care	Your incisions may itch or feel sore, tight or numb for a few weeks. Some bruising around the incision is also normal.	A reddish fluid may drain from your chest tube sites. Call your surgeon if you need to change the bandage more than once a day or drainage occurs more than 5 days after surgery. Call your surgeon if you feel a “grinding” or “clicking” sensation.		Keep wound sites clean and dry. Do not use lotions or creams. No hard scrubbing.
Doctors Visits	Call your surgeon and <i>local</i> cardiologist to schedule follow-up appointments. This is extremely important to maintain continuity of care.	Visit your local cardiologist for follow-up.	Visit your surgeon for follow-up.	Follow-up as needed.
General	Your legs may swell a little, especially if you had veins removed from your legs during surgery. You may use Extra Strength Tylenol™ every four hours for pain.	During the day, get up once an hour and walk around for a few minutes. When sitting or sleeping, keep your leg(s) elevated. To help with circulation, avoid crossing your legs. If you have diabetes, continue to monitor your blood sugar levels and keep them in normal range to prevent complications. Some depression is normal.	To protect your breastbone from injury, do not drive until your surgeon gives approval. Word finding capacity and math skills may be decreased for a period of time.	Contact the <i>American Heart Association (AHA)</i> for more information regarding your health and other support networks. Minimally invasive surgery recovery - The basic rule of thumb is that if it hurts don’t do it.

When to Call Your Doctor

It is a good idea to keep emergency numbers (surgeon, local doctor and family members) by your telephone. If you experience any of the following symptoms, it is essential for you to let your doctor know:

- Chills, or temperature above 101 degrees
 - Fainting or a severe headache
 - Drainage from an incision
 - Loss of consciousness
 - Chest pain similar to what you had before the surgery
- Pain not relieved by pain medication
 - Blood in urine or stool
 - Fluttering in the chest or a rapid heart rate (palpitations)
 - Shortness of breath that does not go away with rest and/or gets worse when lying in bed
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
 - **Increased** swelling, redness or bruising in or around the incisions
 - Marked swelling of legs, ankles and/or feet
 - “Clicking” or “grinding” sensation in breast bone