



ST VINCENT'S
HOSPITAL
MELBOURNE

A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA

*Inspired
by
You*

Going Home after Lung Surgery

A guide for Patients, Carers and Families

GOING HOME AFTER LUNG SURGERY

You will need to be picked up by someone between **9am and 10am** on the day you go home. If you are not able to be picked up by 10am, you can wait in the discharge lounge. The discharge lounge has a nurse, and provides drinks and snacks whilst you are waiting.

Before leaving please make sure you have the following:

- All of your medications you have brought in with you.
- Any new medications from the pharmacist
- 'Going home after lung surgery' educational booklet
- Follow-up appointments and instructions- you will be seen by the surgeon in the lung clinic usually 2-4 weeks after your operation.

COMMONLY ASKED QUESTIONS: AFTER YOU LEAVE HOSPITAL

The following section covers common questions patients ask after lung surgery. Please speak with your doctor or nurse if you have any further questions, or if any of this information is unclear.

IS IT NORMAL TO FEEL TIRED AFTER I GO HOME?

It is common to have less energy after your operation. Recovery time varies with each patient. Increase your activities each day as much as you can. Always balance activity periods with rest periods. Rest is an important part of your recovery.

WILL I HAVE PAIN WHEN I AM AT HOME?

Pain may continue for days, weeks or months. You will be given some pain relieving tablets from the pharmacist to take home. If the pain relieving tablets you are taking do not decrease your pain, then please see your local doctor. Stronger medication may be needed for a short time until you are more comfortable.

Constipation (having trouble passing stool) is a common side-effect from pain relieving tablets. It is important that you take bowel opening tablets (laxatives) given to you by the pharmacist.



National Heart Foundation Guidelines for walking after leaving hospital:

Week	Minimum time (minutes)	Times per day	Pace
1	5–10	2	Stroll
2	10–15	2	Comfortable
3	15–20	2	Comfortable
4	20–25	1–2	Comfortable/Stride out
5	25–30	1–2	Comfortable/Stride out
6	30+	1–2	Comfortable/Stride out

WHAT ACTIVITY CAN I DO AT HOME?

You can slowly return to your usual activities over time. Your activity will be increased according to what you can tolerate. Walking is strongly encouraged, and it is recommended that you begin with short, frequent walks.

WHEN CAN I LIFT HEAVY OBJECTS?

Normally, you should not lift anything heavier than 2-3kg for the first 2 weeks after your operation. This means you should do less house work for the first 2 weeks, or until the pain has settled. Check with your doctor before you do any heavy lifting if you are unsure.

WHAT EXERCISES CAN I DO?

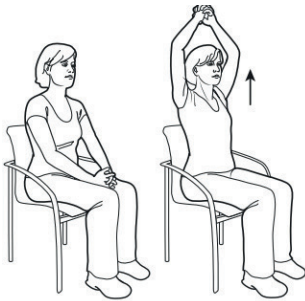
We encourage you to use the arm and shoulder on the side of your operation in all of your activities. Use it when you bathe, brush your hair and reach up to a cabinet shelf, as long as it is not painful.

Slowly begin your normal activities to help you regain full use of your arm

and shoulder. The exercises shown below will help you to regain full arm and shoulder movement. These exercises should feel like a stretch and they should not cause you pain. As your normal movement in your shoulders and arms returns, you will find the exercises become easier. You should begin these exercises the day after your chest drain is removed.

Please repeat these 10 times, in the morning and afternoon until all the exercises are easy. The exercises should give you no pain.

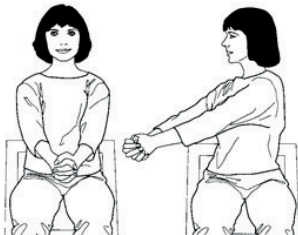
Reach arms up



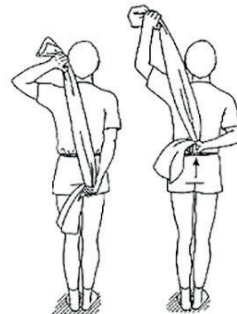
Reach arms behind your back



Gentle rotation



Gentle side bend





CAN I HAVE A SHOWER?

We suggest that you shower every day and look at your wounds. Use soap when you shower and gently wash all of your wounds. Pat the wounds dry and do not rub them.

Please check your wounds for infection. Signs of infection are:

- redness,
- swelling,
- leaking of fluid,
- increased pain,
- wounds that have opened.

If this is happening to your wounds, please see your local doctor. Please do not take a bath until your surgeon says so.

WHEN CAN I GO BACK TO WORK?

You will need to speak with your doctor as this will depend on your job. A medical certificate can be given to you and your carer.

WHEN IS IT SAFE FOR ME TO DRIVE?

You can begin driving after you have:

- Regained full movement of the arm and shoulder on the side of your surgery
- Stopped taking pain medication

This will usually take 2 weeks.

WHAT DO I DO IF I AM A SMOKER?

It is recommended that you do not smoke after your operation. Smoking cigarettes is harmful to your health. It can slow down the healing of your lung. Smoking causes the blood vessels in your lungs to become narrow. This decreases the amount of oxygen in the lungs. It can cause problems with breathing and regular activities. It is also important to avoid places that are smoky.

Your nurse can give you information if you need help with:

- quitting,
- dealing with other smokers,
- or situations where smoke is present.

The doctor can also give you a nicotine patch to wear if you have cravings whilst you are in hospital.

DO I HAVE TO CHANGE MY DIET AFTER MY OPERATION?

No, you can continue your normal diet at home. Please avoid drinking alcohol whilst you are taking pain relief tablets.

WHEN IS IT SAFE FOR ME TO FLY?

Your doctor can tell you this after your operation.

If you are a patient from Tasmania:

Your doctor will decide if it is safe for you to fly home. If it is not safe, then you will have to go home on the 'Spirit of Tasmania' boat. Your flight/boat ticket will be booked by the Launceston Public Transport service. If you need a wheel chair at the airport, then you will need to tell the Tasmanian booking service so that they can organise this when they book your tickets.

To contact the Launceston Public Transport service please call
03 6348 7249



CONTACT DETAILS

If you have any other questions, please talk to your nurse or doctor looking after you.

Thoracic surgeons

A/Prof Gavin Wright

Mr Naveed Alam

Nurse Unit Manager 4 East

Sally Kemp





If you have any concerns and would like to ring the ward, please call **9231 4621** to speak with the nurse in charge.



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