

# HEART SURGERY

AFTER SURGERY CARE



Lingard  
Private Hospital



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# Daily Living After Your Heart Surgery

**Our Allied Health team** will assist you in preparing to return home and resume your usual activities:



## Physiotherapy

A physiotherapist will review you to monitor your lung function and ensure you are able to take deep breaths to keep oxygen levels up in your body. They will also mobilise you on the first day after surgery, to prevent any deconditioning due to inactivity.



## Occupational Therapy

An occupational therapist will review you to educate you about energy conservation techniques after surgery, monitor your pressure care, and assist with the setup of any equipment needed for home.



## Social Work

A social worker will be available to help coordinate services, if you need further assistance when you return home after surgery.

## Dietitian

If needed, a dietitian will review your diet and ensure that you follow a healthy diet to avoid any heart health issues after surgery.



# What To Expect After Surgery

During surgery, your lungs are deflated and you are lying down for a long period of time. This puts you at risk of complications including blood clots, decreased oxygen to your lungs and body, developing a productive cough and becoming weak. These complications can be prevented by getting out of bed as soon as possible, sitting upright and performing the deep breathing exercises your physiotherapist taught you before surgery.

On the first day after surgery, it is expected that you will mobilise out of bed to a chair with the assistance of a nurse and/or physiotherapist. Each day after this, you will progress the distance that you walk with your physiotherapist to help get you strong and ready for rehabilitation. By day 4-7 you will be aiming to trial stairs.

Increased awareness of heartbeat, breathing and muscle tension is normal and should pass with time.

# What To Avoid After Surgery

During surgery your sternum has been cut through, and just like any other broken bone, it needs time to heal. The following are guidelines to follow to help with healing:

- Do not use your hands to push/pull or stand
- Do not lie in bed all day; if you are unable to sit out of bed due to medical issues, keep the head of the bed upright as much as possible
- Do use your leg muscles rather than pushing up with arms when standing from a chair
- Do brace your chest with a rolled up towel or over-pressure when coughing, sneezing or deep breathing.

# After Heart Surgery: Physical Activity Guidelines



## Immediately

Walking, stationary cycling, walking around shops (but not carrying anything, not pushing trolley), playing cards/board games, reading.

## After 6 Weeks

Housework (sweeping, laundry), riding a bicycle outdoors, fishing/boating.



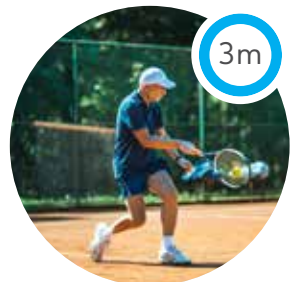
## After 2 Months

Riding a lawn mower, driving a tractor, carrying wet laundry in a basket.



## After 3 Months

Swimming, fishing, golfing, bowling, rowing, running, tennis, heavy weight lifting, digging/shovelling, participating in competitive sports.



### Note:

Weights or upper body activities are not suitable with uncontrolled blood pressure, symptomatic irregular heart rhythms, unstable angina, or severe heart attack.

After your operation, you will be expected to mobilise daily and progress the distance and/or the amount of walks per day each week.

## Walking guide

Time after surgery	Duration of walking	Repetitions
Week 1	5 minutes	3 times per day
Week 2	10 minutes	3 times per day
Week 3	15 minutes	2 times per day
Week 4	20 minutes	1 time per day
Week 5	20 minutes	2 times per day
Week 6	30 minutes	1-2 times per day





## Daily Stretches

Complete the following stretches 1-2 times daily. Do this for 6 weeks after the operation until you are moving your shoulders well and your posture has improved. Repeat each exercise 5 times.

1.

Side Neck Bend



5.

Seated Reach to Floor



2.

Active Neck Rotation



6.

Trunk Rotation



3.

Shoulder Rolls



7.

Side Bend



4.

Shoulder Raise with Extended Arms





# Energy Conservation Techniques After Surgery

## Think and plan ahead

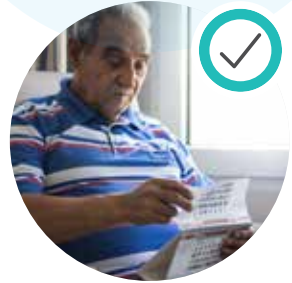
- Alternate heavy and light tasks: e.g. make the bed and then read the newspaper
- Sit down where possible when completing tasks like showering, cooking or ironing
- Do not work as hard on hot or humid days
- Do not rush; leave extra time to complete tasks.



## Avoid unnecessary tasks

Ask yourself:

- Why am I doing this task?
- Does it have to be done?
- Can it wait?
- Can I get someone else to do it?



## Organise your work area

- Arrange frequently used items for easy access between shoulder and hip height
- Leave items on bench top or stove if used daily such as saucepans or appliances.



## Use correct body mechanics

- Sit in chairs with a high, firm seat and armrests as this is easier to stand from a seated position
- Use larger muscles where possible; when standing push up using your legs more than your arms
- Use a trolley on wheels to move objects rather than carry them
- To lift an object, bend knees and keep back straight
- To carry an object, hold it close to your body.



## Leave time for rest and relaxation

- Have regular rest periods; when you begin to fatigue take a break
- Where possible, avoid situations that cause stress
- Learn how to control your response to stress; remember to use relaxation techniques.



# Rehabilitation: 6 Weeks After Surgery

## Activity

### Engage in 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week:

- Puffing but still able to talk
- Feel your heart beating but still comfortable
- Start to feel warm from the effort
- Aim for 5-6 relaxation activities every week.

An exercise physiologist or physiotherapist will guide you through the type and intensity of exercises that is safe for you. You will be encouraged to participate in the cardiac Strength, Conditioning and Rehabilitation program at Lingard's SCORE gym.

### Mode:

CV activities that use large muscle groups—cycling, walking, swimming, resistance training.

### Duration:

30-60 minutes, Resistance; 2-4 sets, 12-15 reps, 8-10 different exercises.

### Amount:

Supervised sessions 1-3 times per week, however exercise on most days is recommended.

### Intensity:

- 55%HR max
- BORG/RPE scale (11-14/20)
- Recent evidence suggests that there are benefits of exercise with a Borg RPE score down to 9.





If you have any questions that require an urgent response please contact the hospital directly on 02 4969 6799.

In an emergency or life threatening situation you must go to your local Emergency Department for appropriate treatment.

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