

Heart Surgery

Your follow-up care

Patient: _____

Procedure: _____

Surgery Date: _____

Attending Doctor: _____

Follow-up Visit: _____
DAY and DATE TIME

This handout explains follow-up care after having heart surgery. It includes information about clinic visits, diet, activity, and when to call your Cardiac Surgery Team.

Your Follow-up Visits

With Cardiac Surgery at UWMC Regional Heart Center

See your surgeon or cardiac surgery advanced care practitioner (ACP) about 1 to 2 weeks after surgery.

This follow-up visit may be scheduled before you leave the hospital. Call the clinic at 206.598.8060 to make or reschedule your appointment.

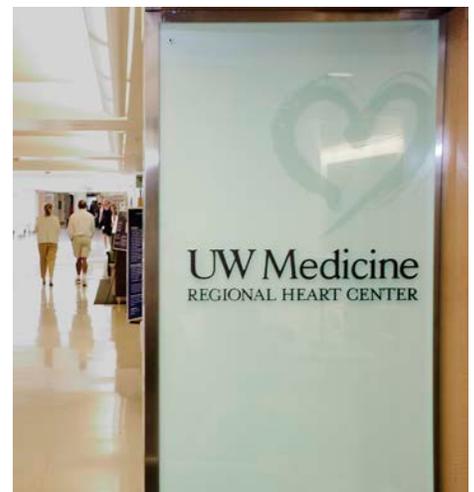
At this visit:

- Your stitches will likely be removed.
- Bring your medicines or a list of your current medicines with you.
- Bring your “Daily Record,” on page 3 of this handout, with you.

The Cardiac Surgery Team will monitor most of your medicines for 1 month after surgery or until you visit your primary care provider, whichever is sooner.

With Your Cardiologist

Call your cardiologist’s office as soon as you get home after surgery.



You will come to the Regional Heart Center for a follow-up visit about 1 to 2 weeks after your surgery.

You will need to see your cardiologist within 1 month, or sooner, depending on what your healthcare team has advised.

Every person who has cardiac surgery needs to see their cardiologist for:

- An after-surgery checkup
- Cardiac risk reduction
- Ongoing care for cardiac issues such as high blood pressure or heart failure

With Your Primary Care Provider

Schedule a visit with your primary care provider (PCP) within 1 month after your surgery, or sooner if advised to do so. Your PCP will check on health issues that you had before your heart surgery and any new issues that may have developed since your surgery.

When to Call Your Cardiac Surgery Team

Call the Cardiac Surgery Team if you have:

- Fever higher than 101° F (38.5° C)
- Increased redness, swelling, or tenderness around your incision
- An opening in or drainage from your incision
- Fast or slow resting heart rate:
 - Less than 60 beats per minute
 - Or, more than 100 beats per minute
- New onset of *palpitations* (irregular heart beat) or skipped beats
- Return of symptoms you had before surgery, such as angina
- Changes in breathing, or a hard time breathing
- Blood pressure higher than 140/90 or lower than 90/60
- Weight gain of 3 pounds or more within 5 days
- Increased swelling in your feet or ankles
- Been feeling sick to your stomach or are vomiting
- Not been able to take your medicines
- Any questions or concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

The Cardiac Surgery Team is always available to talk about your symptoms or concerns. See page 5 for phone numbers to use during and after clinic hours.

Your Diet After Heart Surgery

If You Are on a Regular Diet

- For 1 month after surgery:
 - Eat as many calories as you can.
 - Eat plenty of protein. Protein helps with wound healing.
- After 1 month, eat a diet that is low in saturated fat, cholesterol, and trans-fatty acid.

If You Have Diabetes or High Blood Sugar

- Eat the diet that is recommended by the American Diabetes Association (ADA), unless your doctor tells you otherwise.
- Record your blood sugar levels before meals and at bedtime.
- Keep your blood sugar levels as close to normal as you can. This helps your incision heal and lowers your risk for infection after surgery.

If You Are on a Special Diet

- Follow the special diet that has been prescribed for you.
- Talk with your dietitian if you have any questions.

Self-care After Heart Surgery

If You Use Tobacco

The nicotine in tobacco reduces blood flow to your tissues and makes it hard for your wound to heal.

If you use tobacco, we strongly encourage you to quit smoking or using tobacco of any kind. If you need help, talk with your primary care provider or someone on your healthcare team at UWMC.

Walking

- If you are able, walk as much as possible. Walk at least 4 times every day, and increase the distance of your walks every day.
- Walking helps prevent pneumonia, strengthens muscles, helps your body heal, and keeps your blood sugar at better levels.
- It is OK to walk up and down stairs, if you are able.

Incision Care and Taking a Shower

- For 6 weeks after your surgery, do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, go swimming, or soak your incision.

- Take a shower and clean your incision at least once a day. **Be sure your hands are clean and that you use a mild soap.** This will reduce your risk of infection.
- Do **not** use lotions or bandages on your incision unless you are told to do so.

Be Careful and Follow Sternal Precautions

- If your incision is in the center of your chest:
 - For 6 weeks after your surgery, do **not** lift, pull, or push anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. (A gallon of water weighs a little more than 8 pounds.)
 - For 12 weeks after surgery, do **not** do any activities that may stress or twist your sternum. This includes activities such as riding a bike, batting, golfing, tennis, or bowling.
- You may lie and sleep on your side.
- Call the Cardiac Surgery Team if you feel “popping” or “clicking” in your chest.

Driving

If your incision is in the center of your chest:

- Do **not** drive for at least 4 weeks after your surgery.
- Ask your Cardiac Surgery Team when you can drive again.

Sexual Activity

You may resume sexual activity when you feel comfortable doing so. Take care to protect your incision and follow your sternal precautions.

Calling Your Cardiac Surgery Team

If you need to call your Cardiac Surgery Team:

- **Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.**, call the Cardiac Surgery Outpatient Nurse at 206.598.8060.
- **After hours and on weekends and holidays**, call 206.598.6190 and ask for the Cardiac Surgery Fellow on call to be paged.
- See other phone numbers in the “Questions” box on this page.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call:

Cardiac Surgery Nurse:
206.598.8060

Cardiac Surgery Clinic:
206.598.8017
(Fax: 206.598.4669)

Cardiac Surgery Patient Care Coordinator: 206.598.3636

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask for the Cardiac Surgery Fellow on call to be paged.