

## Coping with recovery after heart surgery

The period after you leave hospital can be a difficult time. You are not fully recovered and probably cannot do some of the things you used to. Common reactions include:

- Doing too much.
- Doing too much too soon.
- Difficulty following instructions.
- Getting depressed.
- Being anxious.

## So what can you do about it?

Allow yourself time to rest. The work you did in hospital needs to continue when you go home.

- Plan something to look forward to everyday.
- Make a list of activities you enjoy.
- Decide which of these you want to do each day.
- Be realistic. It is better to do something you are able to do rather than feel bad because you've tried to do too much.
- Try to write down your day's activity plan the evening before so that you have a plan of action to follow when you get up in the morning.

Remember to keep up your level of social contact with friends.

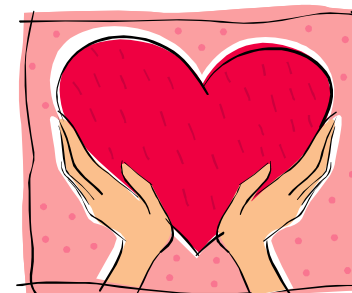
## Think about relaxation

Relaxation and breathing exercises affect certain chemicals in your body and can help you feel calm. Visit

[www.heartfoundation.org.nz](http://www.heartfoundation.org.nz) for a copy of a simple exercise. For information on dealing with stress, visit [www.mentalhealth.org.nz](http://www.mentalhealth.org.nz)

# Cardiac Surgery (Otago)

## What you should know when going home after heart surgery



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# Post Cardiac Surgery Booklet

**Pain management** – take Panadol 4 times a day for two weeks and then reduce slowly. Remember the bedtime dose. You might experience chest and leg discomfort for 6-8 weeks and your affected leg might be swollen for 6 weeks.

**See your doctor within a week of going home.** Tell your doctor if anything is different, for instance:

- A high temperature, especially for patients with new valves.
- New signs of swelling, redness or discharge at your wound.
- A persistent rapid pulse.
- Undue breathlessness at rest.
- Angina symptoms.
- Any other new problem.

**Eat well.** You need calories to provide energy, protein to repair your body, vegetables to provide vitamins and calcium rich foods to mend your sternum. Don't worry about a healthy heart diet for 4 weeks. Drink plenty of fluids to avoid constipation.

**Get plenty of rest.** Set aside a quiet time but don't sleep too long during the daytime. Sleep disruptions and vivid dreams are normal. Keep visitors to a minimum for the first 2 weeks.

**Read your 'Road to Recovery' book** about weekly activities. Follow the exercise guidelines even when you feel tired.

**No heavy lifting.** Do not lift anything heavier than 2½ kg for the first month to allow the breastbone to heal.

**No driving for at least 4 weeks.** Wear your seatbelt. No commercial driving for 3 months.

**Return to work** between 6 to 12 weeks depending on how physical your job is.

**Spectacles** – as your eyes can be affected by surgery do not change your prescription glasses for 3 to 6 months.

**Stay well by:**

- Being smokefree, we can help you quit - ask us.
- Having regular cholesterol checks, keeping it below 3.5.
- Keeping blood pressure controlled.
- Eating a healthy diet.
- Controlling diabetes.
- Maintaining a healthy weight.
- Getting 30 minutes of moderate exercise a day.
- Keeping stress under control – see next page.

**Medications** may have been changed; you must keep taking these medicines until told to stop by the surgeon or cardiologist. The nurses or the pharmacist will give you a record of your medications to take home.

**When you get home:**

- See your GP within the first week.
- The district nurse will visit.
- An appointment will be sent for you to see the cardiac surgeon.

**Cardiac rehabilitation** will assist your recovery. We urge you to attend the programme in your area.