Lakeridge Health

Going Home After Your Thoracic Surgery

This handout offers information on how to manage your care when you go home after thoracic surgery.

Your activity

- Do not lift anything more than 10 pounds (lbs) until your follow-up appointment with the surgeon.
- Do your deep breathing and coughing exercises until your follow-up appointment with the surgeon.
- Gradually increase your activity. Start with short walks.

Caring for your chest tube site (where your chest tube was removed)

- You may have a small amount of drainage from your chest tube site. This is normal.
- Remove the dressing covering your chest tube site 72 hours after it is removed.
- Patients of Dr. Dickie: You will have a suture. You may be asked to have this suture removed by your family doctor or nurse practitioner 7 days after your discharge from hospital.
- Patients of Dr. Browne, Dr. Sisson and Dr. Trainor: You may have a suture. This suture maybe removed at your post-op appointment. You could be asked to have it removed by your family doctor or nurse practitioner 10 to 14 days after your chest tube is removed.

Having a shower/bath

- Shower: you can begin to have a shower after your chest tube dressing is removed.
- Bath: you can begin to have a bath 7 days after your surgery.

What you can eat/drink

If you had esophageal surgery

- Follow the diet sheet and instructions given to you by the dietitian.

For all other patients

- Eat your regular diet.
- Drink 6 to 8 cups of (1 cup = 250ml) fluids every day.
- Some pain medications and being less active may cause you to have constipation. Constipation is when you have a bowel movement less often than normal. Eat foods that include bran, whole grains, fruits, and vegetables to help prevent constipation. Natural laxatives such as prunes and prune juice may also help you have a bowel movement.

Managing your pain

- You may be given a prescription for pain medication(s) before you leave the hospital. or Your surgeon may send the prescription directly to your pharmacy.
- The nurse will explain how and when to take the pain medication(s) prescribed for you.

Please follow the directions on your prescription. Talk to your pharmacist if you have any questions.

Your follow-up appointment

Call your surgeon's office to schedule a follow up appointment if it was not given to you before leaving the hospital. Do this when you get home from the hospital. This appointment will be scheduled within 2 to 6 weeks after your surgery.

You may need to have a chest x-ray before you see the surgeon. You will receive the information you need about this.

What to expect at your follow up appointment

- Bring your Ontario Health Card (OHIP) with you if this appointment is scheduled in-person.
- Your surgeon will;
  - Checks your incision(s),
  - Reviews the results of your chest x-ray.
  - Explain the results of your lung surgery and what other treatment you may need.

Questions or concerns about symptoms

Call the nurse navigator at your thoracic surgeon's office if you:

- Have any new redness or swelling around your incision(s).
- Have any drainage or pus from your incision(s).
- Have any increase in pain or pain that does not go away with pain medication.
- Have diarrhea.
- Are nauseated or vomiting.
- Are not able to eat or drink.
- New shortness of breath or an increase in your shortness of breath.
- Have a cough that is new or that is getting worse.
- Have a cough with mucous that is yellow or green in colour, and/or has a bad smell.
- Have any new pain, redness or swelling in one or both of your legs.

You can call the nurse navigator at your thoracic surgeon's office from Monday to Friday from 8 am to 4 pm – except on holidays.

- Dr. Browne at 905-576-8711 or 1-866-338-1778 at extension 32383.
- Dr. Dickie at 905-576-8711 or 1-866-338-1778 at extension 36357.
- Dr. Sisson at 905-576-8711 or 1-866-338-1778 at extension 36342.
- Dr. Trainor at 905-576-8711 or 1-866-338-1778 at extension 34481.

You will be referred to the Ontario Health East Telehomecare Remote Surgical Monitoring Program. You need a computer, or a smartphone, tablet or iPad to sign up for this program. You will receive a handout with information about this program.

Go to the Emergency Department at the hospital closest to you if:

- You are not able to contact the nurse navigator or the Telehomecare nurse about any of the symptoms listed above.
- Your incision dressing becomes wet or soiled with a large amount of your blood or body fluids.
- You cough up a large amount of blood.
- You have a fever above 38.3º C/100.9ºF at any time or above 38.0º C/100.4ºF for more than an hour.

Talk to a member of your healthcare team if you have questions or do not understand any of the information in this handout.

Last reviewed: October 2026