

Going home after your vascular surgery on 5 West

After your surgery, there are a few things to watch for when you go home.

Wounds (this includes your incisions)

- If your wounds are dry and closed 2 to 3 days after surgery, you may leave the bandages off.
- You may shower 2 days after surgery.
- Allow the water and gentle soap to run down the wounds and pat dry. Do not scrub.
- Do not soak in a bath tub or go swimming until the wound is well closed and dry (about 3 to 4 weeks after surgery).

Call your family doctor or surgeon if you have:

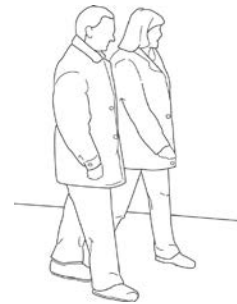
- increased redness around the wound
 - fever (38.5°C or 100°F) and chills
 - increased drainage or a mucky drainage from the wound
 - increased pain at the wound site
-

Surgical clips/staples or sutures

- Clips or sutures are usually removed 10 to 14 days after surgery.
- Clips or sutures may be removed by your surgeon. Your surgeon may request that your family doctor or a visiting nurse remove them.
- Some clips may be left in longer to help with wound healing. Your surgeon will make this decision.
- The sticky tapes over the wound (steri-strips) can remain in place for 3 to 5 days. Remove them in the shower as they loosen.

Activity and rest

- Increase your daily activity by a few minutes each day.
- Plan for several rest periods during the day.
- Avoid pushing, pulling or lifting anything greater than 10 lbs for 4 to 6 weeks.
- Avoid increased activity, caffeine and other stimulants just before bedtime.



Leg swelling

- It is normal to have some swelling in your legs after surgery. This may continue for several weeks.
- Continue to drink water and fluids, 6 to 8 glasses a day unless otherwise instructed.
- Elevate your legs higher than your chest when resting. Avoid crossing your legs.



If the swelling in your legs suddenly increases along with severe pain, shortness of breath or chest pain call 911.

Breathing and chest pain

If you have difficulty breathing or chest pain call 911.

Mood/Emotions

- After major surgery it is normal to have a low mood or a mood that changes.
- Your mood may be low or depressed for 2 to 3 weeks.
- If this lasts more than 3 weeks, contact your family doctor for an appointment.

Driving

If you have had aortic surgery, do not drive for at least 4 to 6 weeks.



If you have had an endovascular repair of the aorta, do not drive for at least 2 weeks.

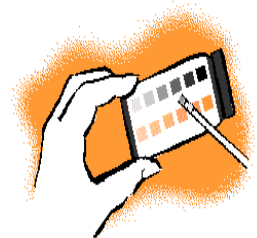
If you are unsure, check with your surgeon when you can safely drive.

Until you are able to drive, sit in the back seat with your seatbelt on when in an vehicle.

Diabetes

If you have diabetes, your blood sugar may vary over the next few weeks after surgery. This will eventually settle down.

Check your blood sugar regularly and follow-up with your family doctor or your diabetes clinic.



Medications

Your medications may need to be adjusted after discharge. See your family doctor within a week after your discharge:

- Review your medications with your family doctor.
- Keep an up-to-date list of medications with you.



Antibiotics

If you have a graft or artificial material inside your body after vascular surgery (stent, graft or arterial patch), you will need antibiotics for:

- dental appointments
- urinary procedures
- surgical procedures
- chronic or long-term infections

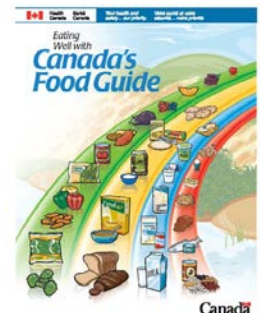
Tell your health care provider about the need for antibiotics before the procedure or surgery takes place.

Diet

It is normal for your eating habits to change after surgery. Food may not taste like it normally does and your appetite can be low. This will gradually improve over several weeks.

If you are still having difficulty after 3 weeks, discuss this with your family doctor or surgeon.

As your appetite returns to normal, plan your meals to include a variety of fruits, vegetables, grains, milk and alternatives and meat and alternatives according to Canada's Food Guide.



Bowel habits

- Your bowel habits may take several weeks to return to normal after surgery.
- If you have not had a bowel movement in 2 days, talk to your pharmacist, family doctor or surgeon.
- Continue to eat a variety of fruits and vegetables, yogurt and high fibre grains such as oatmeal, whole wheat and bran.
- Drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day, unless otherwise directed.



Appointments

- You will have a follow-up appointment with your surgeon in the Vascular Clinic in Ambulatory Care at the Hamilton General Hospital, 2 weeks after surgery.
- If you have any questions for your surgeon please write them down and bring them with you.
- Please book an appointment with your family doctor one week after surgery.



Recognize the signs of stroke

- Weakness – sudden loss of strength or inability to move one side of the body (face, arm or leg).
- Trouble speaking – sudden difficulty speaking, understanding, or new confusion.
- Vision problems – sudden vision problem.
- Headache – sudden severe headache that is unusual.
- Dizziness – sudden difficulty with balance or coordination especially with the above signs.

If you have any of these signs, call 911 right away.



