



## After Open-Heart Surgery

### VISITING YOUR SURGEON

Call your surgeon's office to set up an appointment. **Bring your medications with you. Bring a record of your daily weight, blood pressure, heart rate, and temperature.**

### TRAVEL

You can ride in a car, but do not drive. If your drive home is longer than 60 minutes, stop to stretch your legs and to rest. Be sure to use your seat belt and shoulder strap. If you fly home, have others carry your heavy luggage.

### PSYCHO-SOCIAL

It is normal to have good and bad days after heart surgery. Depression is rare, but can occur. It takes six weeks to get back to "normal" again. Use common sense and rest when you are tired. Most patients can return to work after six weeks.

### WOUND CARE

Your incision should be left open to air. Do not apply ointments to your wound. You should shower daily with soap and water. If there is drainage from your chest incisions, notify your surgeon immediately. We ask that women not wear a bra for three weeks.

### DIET

Your appetite may be down, but will gradually recover. We recommend a diet low in cholesterol, saturated fat, sodium, caffeine, and calories. You may use salt substitutes. There are books on heart healthy diets. We recommend [Heart Fitness for Life](#) by Dr. Mary P. McGowan and [Heart Disease for Dummies](#) by Dr. James M. Rippe.

### ALCOHOL

Drink no more than four ounces of red wine in any one day. Beer contains a lot of salt, so avoid it.

### SMOKING

**DO NOT SMOKE!** Ask friends and family not to smoke around you. If you cannot do it alone, get help from a stop-smoking program or other support group. **Smoking will worsen your heart surgery outcome.**



## **EXERCISE**

It will take a few weeks to regain the strength you had before your operation. We encourage a vigorous walk twice a day. Stop exercising if you develop chest pain, irregular heart beats, dizziness, or shortness of breath. Do not lift anything over eight pounds (about the weight of a gallon of milk). Abstain from sex until after your first office visit.

We hope your experience with heart surgery is a good one.

**Baron L. Hamman, MD**

**James F. Norcross, MD**