



RECOVERING FROM YOUR
Heart Surgery

 **The Elliot**

Heart and
Vascular Center

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Your Recovery Education

As part of your recovery, our care team will provide important education to help you safely prepare for discharge. This includes guidance on what to expect after surgery, physical and occupational therapy recommendations, and nutrition tips to support healing. These teaching sessions will take place right in your hospital room. Once each section has been reviewed with your nurse or therapist, please check the box to indicate it has been completed.

☐ **Discharge Teaching**

☐ **PT/OT Teaching**

☐ **Nutrition Teaching**



Daily Recovery Checklist

During your hospital stay, there are a few key activities that will help support your healing and get you ready to go home. These include breathing exercises—using your incentive spirometer and VPEP device—as well as walking several times a day. Each time you complete one of these activities, please check it off on the chart below. Staying on track with these exercises helps prevent complications, improves your lung function, and builds strength for a safe discharge.



Walking

Short walks after cardiothoracic surgery are strongly encouraged as part of the recovery process. Even short walks—whether around your hospital room or down the hallway—can make a meaningful difference. Take it one step at a time, and keep moving forward!

Why It Matters: Walking boosts circulation, improves lung function, helps prevent blood clots and pneumonia, reactivates your digestive system, and gradually rebuilds your strength.

Frequency: 4 walks per day while recovering in the hospital. Gradually increase the duration of walks.



Breathing Exercises

After open heart surgery, your lungs may not work at full strength right away. Using your Incentive Spirometer and VPEP (Vibratory Positive Expiratory Pressure) device every day can lower your risk of complications like pneumonia and help you heal faster—so keep up the great work with each breath!

Why It Matters: Breathing exercises help re-expand your lungs, clear mucus, and improve oxygen flow.

Frequency: 10 times per hour for every hour you are awake.

Day 1

Walks ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Incentive Spirometer and VPEP ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Day 2

Walks ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Incentive Spirometer and VPEP ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Day 3

Walks ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Incentive Spirometer and VPEP ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Day 4

Walks ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Incentive Spirometer and VPEP ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐



What to Expect on Discharge Day

Discharge day marks a major step forward in your recovery. It means you've met important milestones and are ready to continue healing at home or in another care setting. Our team will make sure you feel confident and prepared before you leave the hospital.

Discharge Evaluation

Before you're discharged, we'll perform a final check to ensure you meet the necessary criteria for a safe transition. If you meet the criteria listed below, you're ready to leave the hospital.

To be cleared for discharge, you must have:

- ✓ Stable vital signs
- ✓ The ability to get out of bed three times a day and for all meals
- ✓ The ability to walk—either independently or with help from staff or a family member
- ✓ Effective pain management
- ✓ Had a bowel movement
- ✓ The ability to eat and drink well

What Happens Next

Your care team will go over your discharge plan, which may include:

- Going home with support
- Starting outpatient physical therapy
- Transferring to a skilled nursing or rehabilitation facility for additional care

Our team will help you and your family coordinate any follow-up services or referrals you may need, including cardiac rehab.

Caring for Your Surgical Site

Before you leave, we'll:

- Remove any remaining drains, catheters, or IV lines
- Check your incision to ensure it is clean, dry, and healing properly

We'll also give you clear instructions for taking care of your wound at home.

Medications

We will review your discharge medications with you and your family, making sure you understand how and when to take them. Most prescriptions will be sent directly to your local pharmacy.

Follow-Up Appointment

Before you leave, we'll schedule a follow-up visit with your cardiothoracic surgeon or advanced practicing provider. This appointment usually takes place 2 to 3 weeks after discharge and allows us to:

- Check your incision site
- Monitor your recovery progress
- Answer any questions you may have
- Schedule an appointment with your cardiologist and your Primary care physician

My Cardiologist Follow-Up:

Date: _____

Time: _____ ☐ AM ☐ PM

Location: _____

My Cardiothoracic Surgeon Follow-Up:

Date: _____

Time: _____ ☐ AM ☐ PM

Location: _____

Have Questions Before You Leave the Hospital?

Our team is always here to support you. Don't hesitate to call your care provider if you have concerns about your recovery, medications, or symptoms.

You can find all of our patient resources and information at elliethospital.org/CTSurgery



At-Home Recovery Checklist

After you are discharged from the hospital, use the checklist below to help track your heart rate, temperature, blood pressure, oxygen saturation, and weight each day. Recording this information daily is an important part of your recovery and will help your care team evaluate your progress at your post-operative follow-up appointment.

Week 1 (Days 1-7)

Day 1

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ Daily Walk (4 Minutes)

Day 2

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ Daily Walk (4 Minutes)

Day 3

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ Daily Walk (4 Minutes)

Day 4

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ Daily Walk (8 Minutes)

Day 5

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ Daily Walk (8 Minutes)

Day 6

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ Daily Walk (10 Minutes)

Day 7

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ Daily Walk (10 Minutes)

Week 2 (Days 8-14)

Day 8

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (12 Minutes)

Day 9

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (12 Minutes)

Day 10

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (16 Minutes)

Day 11

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (16 Minutes)

Day 12

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (18 Minutes)

Day 13

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (18 Minutes)

Day 14

Heart Rate: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Weight: _____

Temperature: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (18 Minutes)

Notes _____

Week 3 (Days 15-21)

Day 15

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (20 Minutes)

Day 16

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (20 Minutes)

Day 17

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (24 Minutes)

Day 18

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (24 Minutes)

Day 19

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (26 Minutes)

Day 20

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (26 Minutes)

Day 21

Heart Rate: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Weight: _____

Temperature: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (26 Minutes)

Notes _____

Week 4 (Days 22-28)

Day 22

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (30 Minutes)

Day 23

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (30 Minutes)

Day 24

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (34 Minutes)

Day 25

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (34 Minutes)

Day 26

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (36 Minutes)

Day 27

Heart Rate: _____

Temperature: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

Weight: _____

☐ **Daily Walk** (36 Minutes)

Day 28

Heart Rate: _____

Blood Pressure: _____

Weight: _____

Temperature: _____

Oxygen Saturation: _____

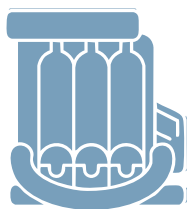
☐ **Daily Walk** (36 Minutes)

Notes _____

Physical/Occupational Therapy Exercises

These light warm-up exercises are designed to support recovery and improve physical function following your heart surgery. Each day, you should complete these exercises four times per day. Complete the first row, then choose two from each the second and third row to complete each time. All standing exercises should be performed at a counter for balance.

Incentive Spirometer



Use 10 Times

Deep Breathing



10 Reps

Neck Stretch



10 Times Side to Side

Neck Stretch



10 Times Back to Front

Marching



10 Times Each Leg

Side Kick



10 Times Each Leg

Knee Movements



10 Times Each Leg

Ankle Circles



10 Times Each Foot

Elbow Movements



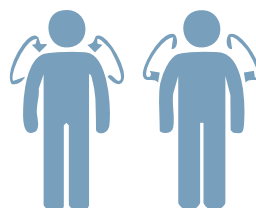
10 Times Each Arm

Wrist Movements



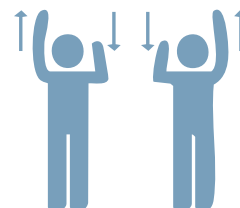
10 Times Each Arm

Shoulder Circles



10 Times Forward/Back

Shoulder Flexion



10 Times (in Tube)

Notes

[illegible]

Notes

[illegible]



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