Thoracoscopy
Video Assisted Thoracic Surgery (VATS)
Care After Surgery

Refer to these instructions for the next few weeks. These discharge instructions provide you with general information on caring for yourself after surgery. Your caregiver may also give you specific instructions. While your treatment has been planned according to the most current medical practices, unavoidable complications occasionally occur. If you have any problems or questions after discharge, call your caregiver.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- A chest tube is left in for several days to drain any remaining fluid or air from the chest cavity. The chest tube will be removed before you leave the hospital. Your caregiver will tell you when the dressing over the chest tube site can be removed.
- It will be normal to be sore for a couple weeks following surgery. See your caregiver if this seems to be getting worse rather than better.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- If it hurts to cough, hold a pillow against your chest when you cough, this may help with the discomfort. In spite of the discomfort, cough frequently, as this helps protect against getting an infection in your lung (*pneumonia*).
- Taking deep breaths keeps lungs inflated and protects against pneumonia.
  - Most patients will go home with an incentive spirometer that encourages deep breathing.
- You may resume normal diet and activities as directed or allowed.
- Use showers for bathing, until seen or as instructed.
- Change dressings if necessary or as directed.
- Avoid lifting or driving until you are instructed otherwise.
- Make an appointment to see your caregiver for stitch (*suture*) or staple removal when instructed.
- Do not travel by airplane for 2 weeks after the chest tube is removed.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have bleeding from wounds.
- You see redness, swelling, or have increasing pain in wounds.
- You have pus coming from your wounds.
- You have an oral temperature above 102° F (38.9° C).
- You have a foul smell coming from the wound or dressing.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop a rash.
- You have difficulty breathing
- You develop any reaction or side effects to medications given.
- You develop lightheadedness or feel faint.
- You develop shortness of breath, difficulty breathing or chest pain.

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