

# Discharge Instructions for Pneumonectomy



You had a surgical procedure called a pneumonectomy. This is the removal of one of your lungs. The surgery may affect the:

- Chest wall
- Muscles
- Ribs
- Membranes covering the lungs (pleura)
- Airways (bronchi)
- Lungs

There are different reasons for having this surgery. The most common reason is lung cancer. It's possible to live with only one lung. But your remaining lung, your heart, and your whole body will have to adjust to this significant change.

## Incision care

- Make sure you and your caregiver follow all directions from your healthcare provider about caring for your cut (incision). Follow directions from your provider about when it's OK to shower or bathe.
- You may have a home health nurse to help change your dressing or bandage and take care of your other health needs. They will change the dressing and report any problems as directed by your healthcare provider.

## Activity

You will notice that you get tired more easily. This is normal because your remaining lung and your heart have to work harder.

- Rest when you are tired.
- Do your activities in order. Do the most important things when you feel the best.
- You may have been told to do exercises to increase the strength and movement in your arms and shoulders. These exercises are important with any surgery of the chest. Make sure you do the exercises as directed.
- You may also have home physical and occupational therapy. The therapists will teach you how to safely do daily activities, movement, and exercise. Make sure you also do these exercises as directed.
- Don't lift anything that is heavy. Ask your healthcare provider for an exact weight limit.
- Don't sit with your legs down or crossed for long periods of time.
- When lying down, use a few pillows to support your knees and lower legs.

## Other home care

- You will continue to take medicines to help lessen the pain. Make sure you know when you are supposed to take these medicines.
- Get a pill organizer with sections for the days of the week and times of day. Fill it once a week. Keep it in a place that will remind you to take your medicine. If you need help organizing your medicines, ask a family member or friend.
- While you are healing and taking pain medicine, don't drive.
- Keep in mind that the pain medicines that you are given after surgery, as well as prescribed iron supplements, might cause constipation.
  - Use laxatives, stool softeners, or enemas as directed by your healthcare provider.
  - Drink water during the day, unless instructed to limit fluids.
  - Eat high-fiber foods, such as whole grains, and fruits and vegetables.
  - Contact your provider if your constipation is not responding to the suggested treatments
- Use your incentive spirometer as directed.
- Return to your diet as you feel able. Eat a healthy, well-balanced diet. A healthy diet helps you heal. Make sure you have lean meats, low-fat or no-fat dairy products, whole grains, and fruits and vegetables.
- Don't smoke. Stay away from people who do smoke and don't let people smoke in your house, in your car, or around you. If you smoke, talk with your healthcare provider about ways to quit.

## Follow-up care

Follow up with your healthcare provider, or as advised. And call your provider if you have any concerns before your appointment.

## When to call your healthcare provider

Call your healthcare provider right away if any of the following occur:

- Fever of 100.4°F ( 38°C) or higher, or as directed by your healthcare provider
- Bleeding from surgical site
- Symptoms get worse or you have new symptoms
- Increased coughing or coughing up brown or bloody mucus
- More redness, swelling, or pain near your incision (cut), or drainage from your incision
- Nausea or vomiting
- More pain
- Shortness of breath
- Swelling in one or both legs
- Feeling that your heart is beating too fast (palpitations)

## Call 911

Call **911** if any of the following occur:

- Trouble breathing, swallowing, or wheezing
- Cool, moist, pale, purple, or blue skin
- Trouble speaking or talking
- Confusion
- Very drowsy or having trouble waking up
- Fainting or loss of consciousness
- Fast heart rate
- Feeling dizzy or weak or a sudden drop in blood pressure
- Feeling of doom
- Severe bleeding

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