

After Bypass Surgery: Reaching, Bending, and Lifting



Moving carefully

During your first few weeks at home, you need to move carefully. This is because your breastbone (sternum) was cut during surgery. The bone takes about 6 to 8 weeks to grow back together. It won't come apart if you move the wrong way. But you may feel pain around the cuts (incisions) or hear a clicking sound in your chest. These are warning signs to move more carefully. Follow the tips below to help prevent straining your breastbone.

Reaching

Until your breastbone heals, twisting your upper body can be painful. When you reach for something, follow these steps:

1. Turn with your entire body so that you face the object.
2. Step close to it.
3. Lean forward from the waist to pick it up.

If you need anything that is above your shoulders, ask someone to get it for you.



Bending and lifting

For the first few weeks, keep the things you use most, such as clothing and dishes, at waist level. If you must bend down to lift something light, follow these steps:

- Stand close to the object.
- Put your feet shoulder-width apart, with one foot slightly in front of the other.

- Hold on to something sturdy with one hand.
- Bend at the knees. Keep your back and neck straight and your shoulders and hips in line.
- Pick up the object and hold it close to your body.
- Slowly push up with your legs.

Don't do heavy lifting, pushing, or pulling. If you need anything that weighs more than 5 to 10 pounds or that is on the floor, ask someone to get it for you.

Stop any activity if you have shortness of breath, chest pain, irregular heartbeat, or dizziness. Call your healthcare provider right away, unless they gave you other directions.

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