Going Home After Cardiac Surgery

Care of Your Child's Incision:

- Check the incision daily for signs of infection: redness, swelling, drainage and/or rash.
- Check your child's temperature for fever above 101°F (38.4° C).
- Sponge bathe your child for the first seven days after surgery.
- Your child may begin taking tub baths or showers on ________________________.
- When bathing your child, be sure to wash the incision and chest tube sites with soap and water. Dry thoroughly. Do not put any lotion, cream or powder on the incision area for at least one month.
- The steri-strips will fall off in 10-14 days and may be removed after two weeks.
- Any remaining stitches will be removed at your follow-up doctor visit.

Diet:

**Infants:** Your baby can take as much breast milk or formula as he wants unless otherwise instructed. He may need extra calories because his heart may be working harder than most babies. If your child needs higher caloric breast milk or formula, the nutritionist will talk with you before going home.

To make feeding time easier for your baby:

- Hold your baby in a semi-upright position.
- Feed your baby smaller amounts more often.
- Limit feeding time to 30 minutes.
- Burp your baby frequently (after an ounce or 5 minutes of breast feeding.)

**Toddlers and School-Age Children:** Offer your child his regular diet unless otherwise instructed. Encourage a balanced diet of foods that promote healing: meats, milk, bread products, fruits and vegetables.

Activity:

Your child may resume normal activity after his follow-up appointment. Until then, follow these recommendations:

**Infants:** Long bouts of crying may tire your infant. Tend to your infant's needs quickly to prevent long periods of crying. When lifting your infant, support his bottom with your hand.

**Toddlers and Preschoolers:** Most toddlers and preschooler children will limit their own activity when they become tired. However, your child should not swim, climb, ride tricycles or big wheels, or roller-skate for one month after surgery.

**School-Age Children and Adolescents:** Your child should avoid contact sports or activities such as bike riding, swimming, climbing, or roller-blading or driving for one month after surgery. Your child should not go to gym class for at least one month. Your child should not lift anything over 10 pounds.
Behavior:

Due to your child's hospitalization and surgery, it is not unusual for him to go back to earlier childhood behaviors such as: bedwetting, awakening during the night, fussiness, nightmares, clinging to parents, etc. These behaviors usually go away within a short period of time. It is important to set limits for your child and discipline appropriately for his age.

School/Day Care:

Your child should not attend school or daycare until after his follow-up appointment. This may mean that you (parent) may have to arrange to be off work or provide other at home care.

SBE/Dental Care:

Review the "Subacute Bacterial Endocarditis (SBE)" CARE CARD. Many children with heart defects require antibiotics prior to dental procedures to prevent infection. Good tooth brushing and regular visits to the dentist are important since tooth decay can lead to heart infection.

Immunizations:

Let your child’s primary care physician know your child had open heart surgery and blood transfusions before he receives his scheduled immunizations.

Questions/Concerns:

The Cardiac Surgery nurses are available 24 hours a day. Call (816) 234-3000 or (888) 322-3580 (toll-free) and ask for the Cardiac Surgery nurse on call.

Call if your child has two or more of the following:

- Rapid, heavy breathing
- Excessive sweating
- Extreme sleepiness
- Unable to drink bottle or breast feed for 2 feedings in a row
- Puffiness of the eyes or face
- Extreme irritability
- Blueness of the skin

Follow-Up Appointments:

Keep all follow-up appointments.

1. ______________________ on ____/____/____ at ____:____ in __________________
2. ______________________ on ____/____/____ at ____:____ in __________________
3. ______________________ on ____/____/____ at ____:____ in __________________

Important Phone Numbers:

Cardiac Surgery Nurse: (816) 234-3000 or (888) 322-3580 (toll-free) (Ask the operator to page the Cardiac Surgery nurse on call.)

Cardiology Clinic: (816) 234-3880

Toll-Free Cardiac Surgery Number: (800) 871-8114