

Going home after your coronary angioplasty

This leaflet explains what to expect and what to watch out for when you go home after your coronary angioplasty. However, if you have recently had a heart attack, you should discuss issues such as returning to work and driving with your doctor or nurse, as it is likely that you will need to wait before resuming these activities. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us using the details on the back page.

How should I care for my wound?

It is normal for your wound to be tender for a few days after the angioplasty. It is also normal for a bruise to develop.

However, if you notice any of the following please contact your GP:

- a hard, tender lump under the skin around the wound (a pea-sized lump is normal)
- any increase in pain, swelling, redness and/or discharge at the site
- a cold foot or hand on the same side as the procedure
- a raised temperature/fever.

If a dressing was applied to the wound site, this is normally left on for three to five days and can be removed thereafter.

If your wound starts to bleed you should apply pressure to the area and:

- keep your leg as straight as possible (lie down if you can) if the wound is in your groin
- raise your hand across your chest if the wound is in your arm.

If the bleeding does not stop **after 10 minutes**, dial 999. **Do not drive yourself to A&E.**

If the bleeding stops within 10 minutes, keep your leg or arm as still as possible for the following four hours. If the bleeding restarts, go to your nearest Emergency Department (A&E). **Do not drive yourself to A&E.**

You can shower when you get home, but avoid rubbing the wound site or having a bath for up to five days. Do not put creams, talcum powder or soap directly onto the site for up to a week after the procedure to avoid irritation and reduce the likelihood of infection.

Chest pain

Your chest is likely to feel tender after the procedure. This is normal and should settle within a few days. Over-the-counter medicines such as paracetamol are normally effective in treating this pain. Always follow the instructions on the packet and never take more than the recommended dose.

However if you experience severe chest pain or pain similar to your angina pain, use your GTN medicine as prescribed. **If your pain lasts longer than 10 minutes after using your GTN medicine, dial 999 or go to your nearest A&E. Do not drive yourself to A&E.**

Can I eat and drink as normal?

You can eat as usual. Drink plenty of fluids (especially water) but avoid alcohol for 24 hours.

Resuming activities

You will usually be able to return to work within a week unless you have a manual job that involves heavy lifting. Check with your doctor or nurse when you can go back to work before leaving hospital. You can self-certify but if you think that you will require a fit note (sometimes called a sick note) please contact your GP.

Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous physical exercise (running, hill climbing, swimming and competitive sports) for at least five days.

You are not allowed to drive for one week after the angioplasty. This is a requirement by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA). Please contact the DVLA if you have a HGV or PSV license. You should also check with your insurance company to make sure you are covered to start driving again.

It is normally safe to fly one to two weeks after the procedure – you should check with your airline and insurance company.

Otherwise you can return to normal activities (including sex) as soon as you feel ready.

Cardiac rehabilitation

Cardiac rehabilitation programmes provide education, support, relaxation and exercise following your heart event, helping you to return to normal and adapt to living with heart disease. Following discharge, we will refer you to your local cardiac rehabilitation team.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your recovery when you are at home, please call the ward you stayed on:

- **Becket Ward, t: 020 7188 0722**
- **Stephen Ward, t: 020 7188 6463**
- **Catheter Lab Day Unit, t: 020 7188 7188 ext 58013**

Alternatively, please call the **Cardiac Rehabilitation Advice Line, t: 020 7188 0946** (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm)

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w: www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets**

British Heart Foundation Helpline

For more information on any other issues relating to heart disease.

t: 0300 330 3311 **w: www.bhf.org.uk**

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)

Write to: Drivers' Medical Enquiries, DVLA, Swansea SA99 1TU

t: 0300 790 6806 **w: www.gov.uk/contact-the-dvla**

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