

Postoperative Cardiac Exercises

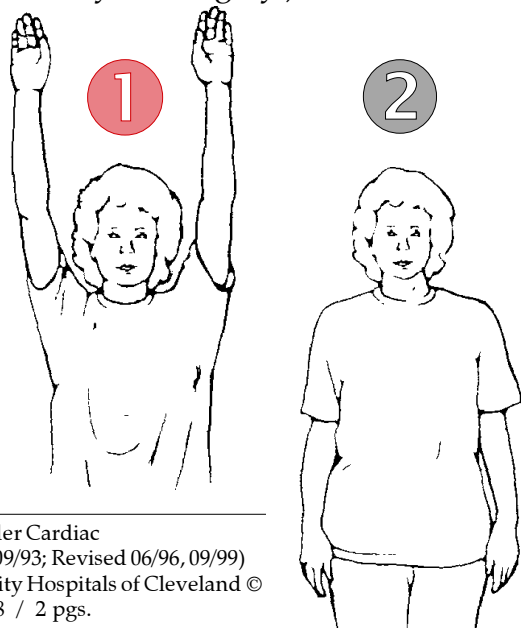
After heart surgery the best way to regain strength is a gradual, steady increase in activity along with frequent rest periods. Walking is the best form of exercise after heart surgery. Along with walking, arm and leg exercises are very important. These exercises will help keep your muscles in shape and help with blood circulation.

ARM EXERCISES

Arm exercises help to improve flexibility and movement of your shoulders. These exercises will help strengthen the muscles in your chest, arms, and shoulders. They can be done in a chair or sitting up in bed. By doing the following exercises before meals and at bedtime your heart will not have to work as hard.

Arm Lifts

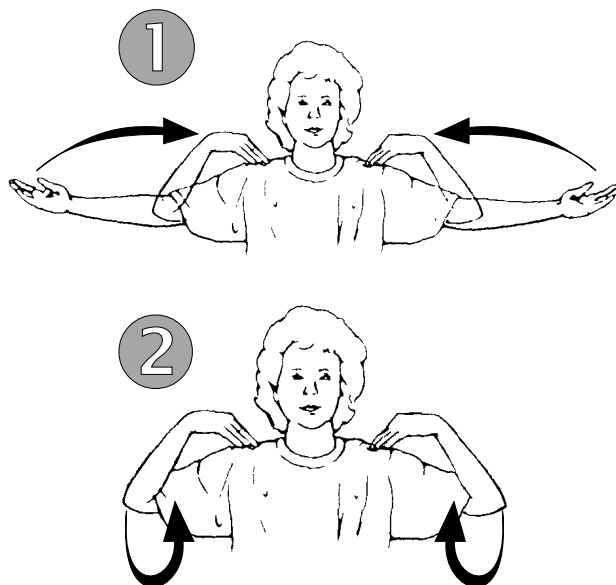
Stretch both your arms straight out in front, raise them straight above your head, then down to your sides. Keep the muscles in your arms relaxed. Repeat at least 10 times. (Reminder: It is recommended that you do not lift more than 10 pounds for 4 to 6 weeks after your surgery.)



File Under Cardiac
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Elbow Circles

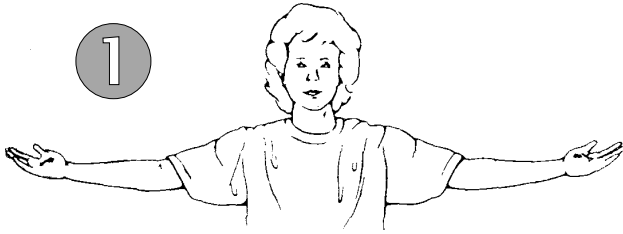
Stretch your arms straight out to your sides, then bend your elbows to touch your shoulders. Move your elbows in a circle 3 times. This will help to lessen the stiffness in your shoulders. Keep the muscles in your arms relaxed. Repeat at least 5 times.



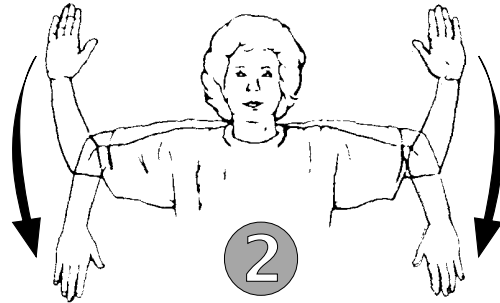
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Shoulder Stretches

Stretch your arms straight out to your sides, then bend your elbows so hands point straight up. Hold this position for 5 seconds. Slowly swing your forearms down so your hands point straight down. Hold for 5



seconds. Repeat at least 5 times. Be sure to always stand up straight. Your lungs cannot work as well if you bend forward and slouch.



LEG EXERCISES

Leg exercises help to better return blood from the legs to the heart. This will lower the chance of getting blood clots in your legs after heart surgery. (Elastic support stockings may also be worn).

Walking is the most important leg exercise. There are exercises you can do with your legs and feet while you are resting in bed. Ask your nurse for a handout of them if you wish ([PI-046](#), Postoperative Leg Exercises). After you are able to walk without help, there are a couple of bending exercises you can do to help with your legs. You will need to hold a chair for support until your strength improves and you become more steady on your feet.

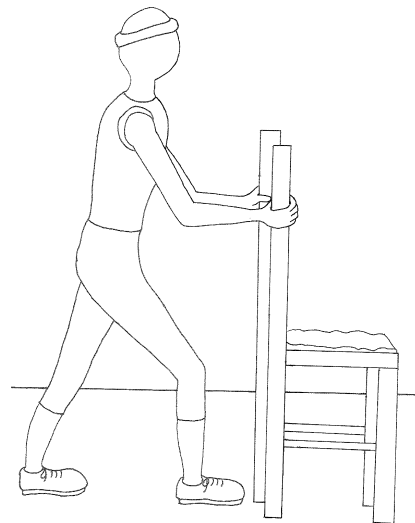
Knee Lifts

Bend your right elbow up at your side and extend your arm straight out in front. Bend your right leg and raise your knee up until it touches your hand. Repeat at least 5 times on each side.

Leg Stretches

Face the back of a chair. Take a step forward toward the back of the chair. Keep both feet flat on the ground. Place one foot out in front of the other. Keep your back leg straight. Bend your front leg at the knee. Lean forward and stretch your back

leg for 3 seconds. Repeat 5 times on each side.



It is normal to breathe a little harder while walking or exercising. If you have a hard time catching your breath, become dizzy, or feel your heart pounding, STOP exercising and rest. If it takes more than 10 minutes to feel rested, you are doing too much. Frequent rest periods are as important as exercising itself. Refer to the information sheet on activity given to you by your nurse for other helpful hints about exercise.