

# Pediatric Cardiac Surgery Discharge Instructions

## Incision Care:

- Keep the incision clean and dry
- Do not apply lotions or powder to the incision for at least 2 weeks
- About one week after surgery most children are ready to resume tub bathing and showers
- Cover the incision when your child is eating or drinking
- Check the incision daily for signs of infection: redness, swelling, drainage or tenderness
- Avoid direct sun exposure – sunburns/tanning will make the scar more visible
- During normal healing there may be bruising or swelling around the incision or bumpiness over the breastbone
- Chest tube stitches are ready to be removed about 7 days after the drainage tube was removed

## Activities:

### *Infants & Toddlers*

- Most children this age do not require strict restrictions from usual activities
- For the first two weeks after surgery avoid picking up your baby under the arms
- Do not return to day care until after your 2 week check-up with the cardiologist
- Use infant car seats when traveling in the car

### *School Age Children & Adolescents*

- Activity is restricted for 6 weeks to allow the breastbone (sternum) to completely heal
- Encourage your child to get dressed each morning, brush their teeth, join the family for meals, and start to catch up on missed school work
- Avoid rough play or activities likely to injure the chest wall: bicycling, climbing, rollerblading, skateboarding or contact sports.
- Do not lift objects weighing more than 5-10lbs (backpacks, younger siblings, pets ...) for 4-6 weeks
- Many children are ready to return to school after their 2 week check-up with the cardiologist. Do not participate in gym class or sports for 6 weeks
- If your teenager drives – do not drive for 4-6 weeks – never drive while taking narcotic pain medication

## **Signs and Symptoms to Report:**

- Fever greater than 101°F or a low grade fever that does not go away
- Difficulty breathing: shortness of breath, rapid or labored breathing, nasal flaring
- Any redness, swelling, drainage or opening of the wound
- Ongoing nausea, vomiting, diarrhea or belly pain
- Poor appetite or no interest in feeding/drinking
- Extreme irritability, inability to get comfortable, not sleeping
- Overall, child doesn't seem to be getting better

## **Miscellaneous:**

- The first week at home, your child should stay home and avoid sick people
- Good hand-washing is the best way to prevent the spread of infection
- Routine immunizations should be deferred for 4-6 weeks
- Routine dental appointments should be deferred for 3 months
- Ask your cardiologist about the need for antibiotics before any dental work or minor surgical procedures
- Take medication as directed by your doctor. Do not stop or start a medication on your own – always check with your doctor.

## **Routine Follow-Up:**

- Pediatric Cardiology – Schedule an appointment to be seen 10-14 days after discharge
- Pediatrician – Schedule an appointment to be seen 3-5 days after discharge

## **After Pacemaker Placement**

- Keep incision site clean and dry for 48hrs. then remove any bandages
- Activity:
  - Keep arm immobilized for 24 hrs.
  - Avoid lifting the arm above your head for 4 weeks
  - Avoid contact sports
- What to Watch For:
  - Signs of infection: fever, redness or drainage from the incision site