

Going Home After  
Your Chest Surgery:  
**Lung Transplantation**

Vancouver General Hospital  
899 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver BC V5Z 1M9  
Tel: 604-875-4111

## Follow-Up Appointment

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Your first appointment is on Tuesday/Friday \_\_\_\_\_ (date) at the Transplant Clinic, 5th floor of the Gordon and Leslie Diamond Health Care Centre, 2772 Laurel Street Vancouver, BC. Arrive for 7:00 am at the laboratory on the main floor to have your blood work done. Proceed to the Clinic on the 5th once you have finished in the Lab.

**DO NOT** take your anti-rejection medicines before your blood work. **DO** bring your medicines with you to take after your blood work is done. Bring your home monitoring log book to each clinic visit.

Clinic Telephone: 604-875-4439

Monday to Friday 7:30 am–3:30 pm

After hours, weekends and statutory holidays please

contact the on-call physician at 604-877-2240 or

1-800-663-6189 for urgent concerns. Ask to speak to the

Lung Transplant Doctor on-call.

## Introduction

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By now the Transplant Team has talked to you about going home. This booklet gives you general information about recovering from the surgery once you are at home. You will also receive a binder with more specific information about self care and home monitoring after a transplant.

## Important Points to Consider

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### Activity

When you get home you may feel more tired than you expect. Do not let this get you down. This is normal and will improve over the next few weeks. You may need some help with grocery shopping, housework, cooking or yard work.

Your body will set limits for your activity. Adjust your activity depending on how you feel. Avoid fatigue! Experience has shown that you feel better, heal faster and gain confidence more quickly if you gradually increase your activity.

- Plan your day to allow yourself time for activity and rest.
- Slowly increase your walking distance on a daily basis and perform your post operative exercises as directed.
- If you experience sweating, shortness of breath or fatigue during any activity, you may be doing too much. Stop and rest. Start the activity later at a slower pace.
- Sometimes during surgery you are in the same position for a long time. This can cause shoulder pain and stiffness. To prevent this follow the exercises outlined in the Post Lung Transplant Exercise booklet and take your pain medicine regularly as prescribed.
- Try to get 8 hours or more of sleep each night. An afternoon nap may be helpful during your first few days at home.
- You may start driving again when the Transplant Team agrees and if you feel safe to do so. If you are still taking pain medicines known as opiates or narcotics (for example oxycodone, hydromorphone or Tylenol with codeine) you **must not** drive. These medicines can make you drowsy.
- If you have any other activity you are wondering about, for example, golfing, swimming, diving, or skiing you should ask the Transplant Team.
- Expect to be off work at least 4 to 6 months. You can discuss this more with the Transplant Team.

## Nutrition

- Eat a healthy diet with a variety of foods from all the food groups.
- **Avoid** eating products containing **grapefruit (fruit or juice)** as they affect the absorption of your medications.
- **Avoid** eating **raw seafood (eg. sushi)** as it may cause infection.
- Strive for a healthy weight with regular exercise. Transplant medications can affect your blood cholesterol, blood glucose, blood pressure and bone mass.
- Your dietitian will continue to follow you at the transplant clinic and modify your diet as needed.
- Take your vitamins and mineral supplements as directed.
- Use safe food handling practices (separating raw meats and fish from fruits and vegetables to avoid cross contamination, washing hands frequently, cleaning surfaces where food is prepared, and refrigerating foods properly). Refer to Health Canada's Food Safety Tips for People with Weakened Immune Systems <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/fn-an/securit/kitchen-cuisine/immune-sys-immunitaire-eng.php>

## Constipation

Constipation can result from the use of pain medicines. The following can help prevent or treat constipation.

- Eat foods that are high in fiber or roughage. Fresh fruits, vegetables, prunes and bran are good choices. Include foods which have helped you move your bowels in the past.
- Drink 8 to 10 glasses of liquid a day.
- Be as physically active as possible.
- A laxative may be needed. Ask your doctor or nurse to recommend one.

## Incision Care

- Your incision will usually have dissolvable sutures with steri-strips along the incision line. These steri-strips will fall off over time.
- Sometimes staples are used and these will be removed before you go home.
- You will also have one or two sutures where the chest drains have been removed. These are removed approximately 7 to 10 days after the chest drains come out.
- You may have a shower or tub bath. Do not let the water from the shower flow directly over your incision because the healing tissue may be very sensitive. Do not soak your incision in the bath until it is well healed. It is best to gently wash your incision with mild soap and water and gently pat dry. Antibacterial soaps should be avoided as these can irritate the skin.
- As your incision heals, it may become itchy. Do not rub or scratch your incision. Do not use Aloe and Vitamin E oils for 2 weeks or until the incision is well healed.
- Protect your incision from the sun. This will prevent your scar from permanently turning brown.
- Women may find it more comfortable to wear a loose fitting bra, elasticized camisole or tank top to provide some support.

## Pain Medicine

- **Pain relief works best when medicine is taken regularly. Take your medicine as directed by your doctor.**
- Good pain relief will help you to return to normal activities faster. Regular activity helps to prevent chest infections and muscle stiffness around the chest and shoulders.
- Always take pain medicines with water or another liquid so they will dissolve and begin to work quickly. Your pain will lessen over time. You will be able to cut down on the amount of pain medicine you need over time.
- If your pain medicine is not working, tell the Transplant Team or your family doctor so that they can give you something else.
- Some pain medicines, such as “opiates”, cause drowsiness, dizziness and nausea. You must not drive a car or use potentially dangerous equipment while taking these medicines.
- Alcohol should also be avoided while taking pain medicines.

## Other Medicines

After your transplant you will start taking many new medicines. The nurses and pharmacist will teach you about these medicines before you are discharged home. It is important for you to know the following information about your medicines:

- The name of each medicine.
- What the medicine does to help you.
- The recommended dose and when you should take it.
- What to do if you miss a dose.
- When to stop taking the medicine.
- Possible side effects.

**\*Check with the Transplant Clinic if any doctor prescribes you new medication. Do not take any over-the-counter medicines, including vitamins, minerals, and herbal products.**

Transplant Clinic Pharmacy: 604-875-5692  
Monday to Friday 7:30 am–3:30 pm

Immunosuppressant medicines are given to you by the Transplant Pharmacy. All other prescriptions are to be taken to your local pharmacy. Please give the Transplant Pharmacy at least one week’s notice when ordering medicines. Do not allow yourself to run out of your transplant medicines.



## Resources

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### **CIBC Centre for Patients and Families**

This Centre can help you find more information on your condition as well as local services and support available. The Centre is located on the main floor of the Jim Pattison Pavilion behind the Information Desk.  
[www.vch.ca/centreforpatients](http://www.vch.ca/centreforpatients)

### **The Lung Association**

BC Lung Association  
2675 Oak Street  
Vancouver, BC V6H 2K2  
604-731-LUNG (5864)  
Toll free out-side lower mainland 1-800-665-LUNG (5864)  
[www.bc.lung.ca](http://www.bc.lung.ca)

### **The Lung Centre**

Gordon and Leslie Diamond Health Care Centre  
7th Floor, 2775 Laurel Street  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1M9  
<http://lungcentre.vch.ca>

### **Healthlink BC**

Speak with a nurse, pharmacist or dietitian  
Services available in 130 languages  
Call 811  
For deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY) call 711  
[www.healthlinkbc.ca](http://www.healthlinkbc.ca)

### **Thoracic Surgery at Vancouver Coastal Health**

[www.bcthoracicsurgery.com/vancouver](http://www.bcthoracicsurgery.com/vancouver)

### **Manager**

T12 Jim Pattison Pavilion  
899 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1M9  
604-875-4094

### **Care Management Leader for the Chest Centre**

T12 Jim Pattison Pavilion  
899 West 12th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 1M9  
604-875-4111 ext. 54214

### **BC Transplant**

British Columbia Transplant Society  
555 W 12th Avenue  
Vancouver, BC V5Z 3X7  
604-877-2240  
[www.transplant.bc.ca](http://www.transplant.bc.ca)

For more copies, go online at <http://vch.eduhealth.ca> or  
email [pchem@vch.ca](mailto:pchem@vch.ca) and quote Catalogue No. **FN.239.G65**  
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person to whom it was given by the health care team.  
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