

At Home After a Vascular Angioplasty

This handout will help guide you as you recover at home after having a Vascular Angioplasty.

Before leaving the hospital, make sure:

- You know the date and location of your next doctor's appointment;
- You have your prescriptions and you know when to take your medications;
- You know what your access site (the cut in your groin or arm) looks and feel like.

Every day you should aim to:

- Be out of bed for most of the day.
- Try to walk short distances 3 to 4 times a day, slowly increasing how far your walk each time.
- Do your breathing exercises at least 10 times per day.
- Make sure to drink a good amount of fluids, unless you've been directed otherwise.
- If you are a smoker, try to break the smoking habit.

Small daily goals will help to keep your recovery on track.

Pain management

Your access site was injected with a local anesthetic or "freezing". As this wears off, you may feel sore in that area for several days. **Sudden or severe pain is not normal.** Any discomfort can usually be managed with acetaminophen (Tylenol™) 650-1000 mg. If you were given a prescription for pain, take your pain medication as ordered. You may have some swelling in your legs for a few days or week.

Activity

You will need to increase your activity slowly while your access site heals. Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds or 4.5 kilograms for 48 hours. You will likely be able to go back to your normal activity within a few days. *Discuss returning to work, driving, sports and sexual activities with your doctor.*

Blood Thinning Medication

Most blood thinners should be restarted the day after surgery. You may also have been prescribed a new blood thinner to take after surgery. Be sure to take your medication as prescribed. If you were seen at the HHS or JBH Thrombosis Clinic preoperatively, you may need to contact the clinic after surgery for additional instruction on restarting your blood thinners. If you have questions about blood thinners, contact your surgeon's office.

Bathing

You can shower the day after your surgery. Do not soak in a bath, swim in pools or soak in a hot tub for 1 week.

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Diet

Most people do well with a light diet on the day of surgery. You can return to your regular diet after that. Aim to eat a diet that is low in fat, salt and cholesterol. Unless directed otherwise, drink 6 to 8 glasses of water a day. This helps to prevent dehydration. It also helps to flush the dye used during your procedure out of your body. Be sure to talk to your doctor about fluid intake if you are on dialysis or have heart failure.

Dressing Care

When you leave the hospital, you will have a dressing covering your access site. Keep this dressing on for 72 hours. When you remove your dressing, you may need to reapply a small Band-Aid to cover the area. Change this Band-Aid daily. Once the access site is healed over (scabbed and not draining), you can leave it open to air.

Incision Care

It may take up to a week for your access site to heal completely. You may have some bruising or discoloration near the access site. You may also have a small lump, **which should not get any bigger** and some soreness when pressure is applied. It is not uncommon to have a small amount of drainage or bleeding from the site. Do not use any creams, lotions or ointments on the access site. **Keep the site clean and dry.**

If you start bleeding or have a fast-growing, painful lump at the access site, call 911 and do the following:

- 1. Lie down and call for help;**
- 2. Put pressure on the access site with your fingers or fist and hold this pressure until emergency help arrives;**
- 3. Stay calm.**

Go to the nearest Emergency Department if:

- You have severe pain in your leg, or it becomes cold, pale, blue, numb or difficult to move;
- You have severe trouble breathing (shortness of breath);
- You have sudden chest pain and shortness of breath, or you cough up blood;
- You have signs of infection such as:
 - Increased pain, swelling, warmth or redness of the skin,
 - Pus draining from the area,
 - A fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F) or chills.

If you have any questions or require additional information, contact your Surgeon's office or your Family Doctor.