

## Thoracic Surgery

### What is thoracic surgery?

Thoracic surgery may be recommended to diagnose or treat a lung or chest condition. As the leading respiratory hospital in the nation, National Jewish Health has thoracic surgeons who specialize in performing complex procedures of the lungs, chest, diaphragm, trachea and esophagus. Our highly trained thoracic surgeons work with you to ensure the best possible outcome for your surgery or procedure.

### How do you get ready for this surgery?

It is very important you follow these instructions:

- **DO NOT** take fish oil or other supplements for 7 days prior to surgery. Make sure your doctors know if you are taking any herbs, vitamins, or diet supplements.
- **DO NOT** eat or drink after \_\_\_\_\_ the night prior to surgery (this includes gum and lozenges).
- Only **SMALL** sips of water are allowed until 4 hours before surgery in order to take any necessary medications.
- **DO NOT** smoke, chew tobacco, use e-cigarettes/vape pens, cannabis vapor, or recreational drugs the day of surgery.
- No marijuana products for 72 hours (3 days) prior to surgery.
- **DO NOT** wear jewelry the day of procedure, including wedding rings. Remove all body piercings. Make arrangements for all jewelry that needs a device to be removed.
- **DO NOT** wear makeup, perfume or lotion on day of surgery.
- **DO NOT** shave or have hair removed (wax, etc.) from surgical area.
- Shower with the provided Hibiclens® soap the night before **AND** the morning of surgery:
  - Use half the soap provided for each wash
  - Wash from neck to waist, front of chest, armpits and down sides of torso
  - **DO NOT** use a “loofah” or other sponge or scrubber
  - Rinse off Hibiclens thoroughly
- Dry off with a **CLEAN** towel (use a new towel for each shower).
- **DO NOT** use any lotions, oils, perfumes or deodorants on skin after shower.
- Wear glasses instead of contact lenses on day of surgery.
- Bring a case for glasses, hearing aids, and dentures.
- Bring your CPAP or BiPAP mask.
- Pack a button-down or zip front shirt to wear home after surgery – it will be easier to put on.
- Consider purchasing Miralax® (laxative) and Colace® (stool softener) to have at home if needed once you are discharged.
- Post-operative pain medication can be constipating.
- Bowel movements can be difficult to pass after surgery.
- Place clean sheets on your bed at home before leaving for the hospital.

### What can you expect the day of surgery?

Please arrive on time according to your pre-surgery instructions but realize that surgery start times are estimations. Some operations take longer than planned and we appreciate your patience.

Leave all non-essential valuables at home, but be sure to bring a good book or something else to read or do.

## What happens after surgery?

- Expect to have some pain, but it should be tolerable:
  - Communicate honestly with your care team in the hospital to ensure that your pain is well managed after you are discharged
- Use your **incentive spirometer** 8-10 times per hour daily, while awake, until your post-surgery follow-up appointment to help prevent pneumonia.
- Expect to be up walking with assistance during your hospitalization.
- You will need someone to drive you home from the hospital when you are discharged.

After discharge, when you are at home

- **NO** strenuous activity or lifting over 10 pounds for 4-6 weeks:
  - Walking is OK and encouraged to help the healing process
  - Do not feel you have to push yourself to engage in your normal routine. It will take time to recover from your surgery.
  - You may shower normally after surgery, but avoid soaking in bathtubs, hot tubs, and pools for three to four weeks
- Take your prescribed pain medication to manage your pain:
  - **DO NOT** drive while taking narcotic pain medication
  - **DO NOT** consume alcohol while taking pain medication
- Applying ice packs to painful areas can also help decrease pain:
  - Place a cloth or towel between skin and ice pack
  - 20 minutes on, remove for at least 20 minutes, repeat as needed
- Follow provided wound care instructions – keep dressing clean and dry, replace as needed:
  - Three days after discharge, remove the dressing and leave uncovered
  - Leave steri strips in place until they fall off
  - Sutures (stitches) will be removed at your post-surgery follow-up appointment
- One of the surgical sites may be located in an area that would be irritated by tight or restrictive undergarments such as bras. It is recommended that these undergarments be avoided in the immediate post-surgery period. However, some patients find that wearing garments such as sports bras or camisoles are more comfortable. You may also cushion tender areas by placing a small piece of gauze (2in x 2in) between the undergarment and skin.
- After surgery it is normal for areas near incision sites to feel numb. As these nerves “wake up” you may experience a burning sensation.
  - Gabapentin is typically given to help with this feeling
  - Contact the clinic if this is not well managed with the prescribed gabapentin
  - Please note that you must wean off gabapentin in a controlled way, guidance on doing this will be provided upon discharge or at your follow-up visit
- Pathology results will be discussed at your post-surgery follow-up appointment 10-12 days after surgery.

## When to call the doctor

- Call 911 or go to ER for sudden chest pain or sudden worsening of shortness of breath.
- Seek medical attention for any of the following:
  - Fever that is greater than 101.5 degrees F
  - Chills
  - Redness, swelling, red streaking, tenderness to touch, drainage, or pus at the incision site(s)

- Uncontrolled bleeding
- Persistent vomiting
- Severe pain unrelieved by medication
- Unable to void (urinate) for 8 hours
- Severe headache
- Leg swelling

Please feel free to contact the clinic with any questions: **303-398-1355, option 4, request a message be left for Thoracic Surgery Team.**

**\*\*Please note, the clinic is only open Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. If you experience any issues outside this timeframe, please call the main number above and ask to speak with the after-hours nurse on duty. If you have emergent concerns, please go to your closest Emergency Room and take your discharge information with you.**

Visit our website for more information about support groups, clinical trials and lifestyle information.

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NOTE: This information is provided to you as an educational service of National Jewish Health. It is not meant to be a substitute for consulting with your own physician.

**National Jewish Health** is the leading respiratory hospital in the nation. Founded 123 years ago as a nonprofit hospital, National Jewish Health today is the only facility in the world dedicated exclusively to groundbreaking medical research and treatment of patients with respiratory, cardiac, immune and related disorders. Patients and families come to National Jewish Health from around the world to receive cutting-edge, comprehensive, coordinated care. To learn more, visit [njhealth.org](http://njhealth.org).