

Post TAVI Care



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More than 1,000,000 people worldwide have received the TAVI procedure.

TAVI is a procedure that replaces the diseased aortic valve in people who have severe aortic stenosis. It is a less invasive procedure than open heart surgery that may help you get back on your feet faster.



Introduction

After my TAVI procedure, what should I expect?



Planning ahead

It is sometimes difficult to predict how much help you require after TAVI. It is useful to plan ahead. It is recommended that you have a caregiver ready to help for at least a week afterwards. Most people would feel stronger after about 1-2 months.



Staying in touch with care team

Your TAVI team (doctor or nurse) will provide additional and more specific follow-up care instructions for you, which may include enrolling you in a cardiac care rehabilitation. To ensure you are recovering as you should, you should attend the scheduled follow-up visits with your TAVI care team.

You should be given a summary of your treatment and this should be shared with your family physician or Drs that are caring for you.

If your follow-up care is with your TAVI Doctor who performed your TAVI, it is important to reach out to your primary physician to let them know how the procedure went.

As you recover, it is important to call or see your care team whenever you have questions or concerns, especially if you experience any unusual problems such as bleeding, pain, other discomfort, or changes in your overall health.

Introduction

After my TAVI procedure, what should I expect?



Finding support after your TAVI

As you recover from TAVI, it is normal to experience a range of emotions. It helps to share your experience and how you are feeling with others. If available, you might also look for local support groups (via your care team) where you can meet and share experiences and tips on managing this post procedural period.

After leaving hospital, there are some important things to remember:

- You will need to protect the incision site and help it heal well.
- You may have aches and pains, which is a normal part of the healing process. Your Health Care team may prescribe medication to help alleviate these.
- Ensure you continue your breathing exercise to expand your lungs and prevent complications such as pneumonia.

In this booklet, you or your caregiver will be able to find a detailed guidance of what to expect and how to take care of yourself after a TAVI procedure when you get home.

A Guide for the First Few Weeks at Home



Exercise is an important part of your recovery, but you should take things easy for your first few days at home. Keep as active as you were on your last day in hospital. Remember to continue with the deep breathing exercises the physiotherapist taught you and slowly and gradually increase your activity each day. Remember that rest is important so take a nap or a rest when you need it.

Accept your limitations and don't overtire yourself. Do not do any heavy lifting, squatting or climbing stairs frequently for the first week. Take a walk with somebody each day and gradually build the distance up.

You may still need some painkillers for this first week – you will find them more effective if you take them regularly, e.g. two 500mg Paracetamol 4 times a day. Don't drive.



A Guide for the First Few Weeks at Home



You should begin to feel stronger and able to do more activities around the house. Increase your walking distances and remember to try to do this each day. Again, do not overly exert and remember to rest when needed. You can start to do light housework. You will find that you will be able to have short visits to the shops for light items.



You should be able to manage most usual household tasks, but still avoid heavy gardening or lifting. Avoid squatting to work on floors. Most patients feel they are back to normal activities at some point during this period but it is important to remember that you have had surgery.



You will be reviewed by the doctor in the outpatient clinic.



Frequently Asked Questions

1. What to take note when I get home after a TAVI procedure?



Rest, sleep and relaxation

During the first few weeks at home you will find that you tire more easily (due to stress of surgery or possible anemia), so adequate rest and sleep are just as important for your recovery as exercising. Do tell your family and friends when you need to rest. Try to get seven to ten hours sleep each night if possible. You may find it difficult for the first week after leaving hospital, as your usual sleep pattern may have been disturbed. If you have discomfort ensure you are taking your pain relief medications. Remember to listen to your body's needs and rest and sleep when required.



Diet

A low sodium diet is recommended. Salt ingested acts like a sponge on the inside of the body and it can hold on to fluid. It can make you feel tired, short of breath and may cause leg swelling. Take food that is nutritious daily. Some patients may experience a slight reduction in appetite in the 1-2 weeks following the procedure. If this is significant, please speak to your healthcare team.



Moods and emotions

Immediately after your operation you may have days when you feel down or depressed, this is known as the post-op blues and it is not unusual to feel this way, so do not worry. You may feel irritable or overly emotional and tearful. This can happen at any time, and often without warning. Be reassured that it usually settles down within the first few months. Both you and your family may be affected by these feelings, so it is important that you discuss this openly with them about how you are feeling. If you are still feeling this way after a couple of months, or you feel unusually depressed, lacking concentration or experiencing memory loss, then you should contact your care team or family doctor.

Frequently Asked Questions



Stress

When you are stressed your body reacts in certain ways: Your muscles become tense, your blood pressure rises, you breathe more rapidly, you sweat and you become anxious. Your body produces more sugar, fatty acids, cholesterol and adrenaline. This can in turn slow down your digestive system and impair your immune system. It is in your best interest to try to avoid something that you know is going to put you in a stressful situation. Speak to a friend or family physician about this.

2. How to take care of the incision/wound?



Bathing and showering

For the first week, avoid swimming pools/soaking in bathtubs to prevent germs in these waters from entering the wound site. However, taking shower daily is recommended to keep your wounds clean and encourage them to heal. You may want to sit on a waterproof chair to shower if needed. If you use a bath tub, remember to:

- ✓ Empty the water before you get out and take your time.
- ✓ Use a non-slip mat or a towel before attempting to stand up.
- ✓ Get assistance to help you get out of the bath.

Frequently Asked Questions



Wounds

Avoid applying ointments, powders, oils, or lotions around your wound. If your wound becomes red, suddenly becomes more painful or starts to discharge fluid, you should consult your GP immediately for advice. If you notice worsening bruising (darkening and swelling), you should also contact your healthcare team. (It is normal to see bruises change from dark purple to greenish/yellow).



Make sure you wash your hands with warm water and soap or a disinfectant before you touch the wound site.



Urgent first aid

It is possible that you may feel a bump at the site of the procedure. This is normal. If this suddenly bleeds or becomes very large and painful, you should lie down on a flat surface and get help. The caregiver should wash their hands and then apply direct pressure about 1-2 cm above the wound site. This pressure would be continued for about 15 minutes, do not lift pressure intermittently to check. The compression is effective if the bump reduces in size after 15 minutes. Rest in bed for the rest of the day. If this does not improve – seek help at the hospital.

3. What my level of activity should be?



Driving

You should not drive following heart valve surgery for 4 weeks from the time of surgery. You can recommence driving after 4 weeks if you are free of symptoms and after clearance from your doctor.

Frequently Asked Questions



Exercises

Walking is the best exercise to do after a TAVI procedure. Lifting, pushing, or pulling are restricted with anything over 2-3 kg in the first week (this period may have to be longer if your TAVI was done through other access sites e.g. from apex of the heart or around the collar bone). Also avoid strenuous gardening, buying groceries, doing laundry or bending over or squatting). For more strenuous exercise (e.g. gym, bicycle), it is not recommended until you have your 30-day follow up visit to your heart team to ensure the wounds have enough time to heal. You may want to consider enrolling in your hospital's cardiac rehabilitation programme for a more controlled manner of reinitiating exercise.



Sexual relations

Many patients that have undergone cardiac surgery experience anxiety about resuming sexual relationships. It is quite safe to have sex and/or sexual stimulation after the operation. However, we generally advise that you wait between 2 and 4 weeks, to give your wounds a chance to heal. You may resume whenever you feel ready.



Holidays and flying

If you are thinking of going abroad, we advise you to wait until after your follow-up appointment. If you are thinking of a long-haul flight, then you should leave it longer, but should discuss and agree the best time with your healthcare team. If you are taking Warfarin, you need to let your anti-coagulant clinic know, as they may need to adjust your dose. It is important that you cover your scars with complete sun block when sunbathing for at least the first six months to avoid sunburn. You must also inform your travel insurance company of the details of your surgery.

Frequently Asked Questions

4. What would cause me a concern and required to seek attention from my physician/heart team?

- Fever
- Weight gain 1-2 kg in a day
- Blood pressure is consistent rise at 160 (perform 3 measures/day)
- Incisional redness / pain / drainage
- Swelling
- Chest pain
- Palpitations / racing heartbeat
- Feeling faint / lightheaded
- Trouble breathing when lie flat, or wake up gasping at night

5. Do I need to take any special medication after TAVI?

Blood thinners medication will be prescribed after TAVI to avoid blood clot adhering around the new valve. The nurse or pharmacist discharging you will give you a supply of tablets until your next medical follow up. You can request for a summary of the medications that you are taking. If you are followed up by a family physician, your healthcare team should communicate with the family physician. You would also be given a memorandum to carry with you for review. You should keep an up-to-date list of your tablets with you at all times, and if you are taking Warfarin, then keep your dosage booklet with you.

6. What is a valve card for?

You should be given a valve card to allow you to know what valve you have received. This should be kept in your wallet. Please show this card whenever you seek care. If you need to do any urgent dental work, please inform your dentist as you will need antibiotics prior to dental work.



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Disclaimer:

This booklet is not intended to be a substitute for professional medical advice and should not be solely relied on for health or personal advice. Always seek the guidance of qualified health professionals with any questions you may have regarding your health or medical condition.