

Sternal Wound Precaution

Sternal precautions are **limitations you have with the use of your arms**. They typically last for **8 weeks** after surgery, but may vary with each individual. These precautions are necessary to allow the breast bone (sternum) to completely heal. Avoidance of these precautions may result in poor healing, wound separation requiring a rewiring of the chest, and complications that may result in further hospitalization.

The following are the precautions recommended by your surgery team:

- **DO NOT** lift, push, and or pull anything heavier than **5-10 pounds**.
- **DO NOT** push or pull with both arms (i.e. getting up from a chair or bed)
- **DO NOT** raise both arms above shoulder level at the same time and keep them there for a prolonged period of time. Single arm movements are encouraged with normal activities of daily living.
- **DO NOT** drive an automobile for **ONE MONTH**. **DO NOT** operate any other type of motorized vehicle (ATVs, jet skis, snowmobiles, farm/ranch equipment, airplanes) for two months following surgery.

Additional considerations: Activities with vibration/shaking or aggressive arm motion or chest pressure should be avoided until the sternal bone is completely healed (8weeks). Some of these activities may include, but are not limited to, the following: hunting, fishing, horseback riding, tennis, picking up small children/animals, golfing, vacuuming, mowing, chainsaw operation, etc.

Tips for moving easier:

1. Get out of bed by rolling to your side first, and then push with one arm to sit up.
2. Position yourself at the head of the bed before lying down to avoid the need to scoot up.
3. Avoid deep chairs/recliners that make it hard to get out. Prop yourself up with pillows in bed to avoid increased pressure on your chest with lying flat.
4. Sit close to the edge, lean forward, and use more of your legs when standing up.