

# Discharge Instructions: After the Surgical Repair of a Chest Wall Deformity

Your child is now in the recovery stage after his/her surgical repair of a chest wall deformity (pectus excavatum or pectus carinatum). Because the surgery typically involves the placement of one or more metal bars under your child's sternum, there are some important things you and your child need to know and instructions you need to follow to ensure his/her successful recovery.

- Your child may return to school/work 2 to 3 weeks after discharge from the hospital.
- Walking is excellent exercise and should be done frequently to build strength.
- No contact sports or strenuous activity for 2 months. This includes contact sports in gym class. His/her surgeon will specify their release date during post-op visits.
- No heavy lifting. No lifting greater than 10 lbs. for 2 months.
- Do not carry book bags or backpacks for 2 months.
- Two sets of books should be provided – one for home and one for school.
- Avoid slouching or slumping. Good posture is important.
- Avoid sleeping on your side for 4 weeks.
- If your child needs an MRI or a CT scan, please tell the technologist that your child has a metal bar under his sternum. MRI testing and CT scans of the chest and abdomen can be safely performed but the metal bar may impact test results.
- CPR can be performed but may require more force than usual.
- Defibrillation for cardiac arrhythmia can be performed using anterior/posterior placement.
- The metal bar may set off metal alarm systems (airport, etc.). The bar is not visible from the outside.

## Managing Your Child's Pain

- Some medications are to be taken “as needed” while others need to be taken at specific times. Take all medications as directed.
- Pain is usually worse at night and in the morning as your child wakes up and starts to move around.
- Your child will likely be more comfortable sleeping in a semi-upright position (recliner) for about 3 to 4 weeks.

## Incision Care

- Your child can shower 2 days after surgery.
- Steri-strips (small pieces of white tape used to close the incision) should remain in place for at least 1 week after surgery. If the Steri-strips have not fallen off after 14 days, you can remove them.
- Gently wash the area once the Steri-strips are removed.

## When to Call Your Child's Doctor

- Fever greater than 101.5°F
- Continual cough
- Severe chest pain, especially with deep breaths

*(continued on back)*

## **When to Call Your Child's Doctor**

*(continued from front)*

- Redness, drainage or swelling at the incision sites
- Any breathing difficulties
- Any injury to the chest that may cause the bar to move

## **Follow-up Appointment**

Your child will need to see his/her surgeon 1 to 2 weeks after the surgery. If you have any questions before the follow-up appointment, please call 919-350-8797.

### **WakeMed Raleigh Medical Park**

23 Sunnybrook Road, Suite 200  
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### **WakeMed North**

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