

# Symptoms after Heart Surgery



**What to do:**

- Get help right away!
- Have someone drive you to the local Emergency Department or call 911.
- Do NOT drive yourself.

**THIS IS AN EMERGENCY**

**If you have:**

- bloody bowel movements
- a cough with bright, red blood
- chest pain that is similar to what you felt before surgery
- a temperature that is higher than 101.3 °F or 38.5 °C with chills
- fainting spells
- a racing or fluttering heart beat with shortness of breath or feeling unwell
- vomiting or watery bowel movements
- severe pain in your belly
- difficulty breathing that does not get better with rest
- any 1 or more of the following:
  - sudden numbness or weakness in your arm(s) or leg(s)
  - trouble speaking
  - vision problems
  - sudden confusion or dizziness



**What to do:**

- Call your Family Doctor or the Community Nurse Practitioner right away
- If you cannot get an appointment right away, **please go to the local Emergency Department**

**CAUTION – THIS IS URGENT**

**If you have:**

- extreme tiredness that is new or not improving
- a racing or fluttering heart beat that does not cause shortness of breath and does not make you feel unwell
- a temperature that is higher than 100.0 °F or 38.0 °C 2 times in 24 hours
- sharp pain with every deep breath
- pain in your calf that becomes worse when pointing your foot up or down
- swelling or pain in your ankle(s) or leg(s) that is getting worse
- a new skin rash
- frequent urination, urgency, burning with urination, or bloody urine
- shortness of breath that is getting worse
- if your incision(s) become(s) red, warm to touch, swollen, open or draining

**\*\*Notify your Heart Surgeon if you have been given an antibiotic for your surgical incision.**



**What to do:**

- ✓ Continue to take your medicine(s) as prescribed.
- ✓ Please book your follow-up appointments with your family doctor, heart surgeon, cardiologist or Internal Medicine doctor

**ALL CLEAR – This zone is your goal!**

**Your are recovering from surgery as expected if:**

- ✓ Your pain is well-controlled.
- ✓ Your incisions are healing well.
- ✓ You are eating a Healthy Heart diet.
- ✓ You are walking a little more each day.
- ✓ You are feeling that your energy level is improving each day.
- ✓ Your bladder and bowel are working normally.

**Keep up the good work!**

You can read more about feelings after surgery, energy level, sleep patterns, bowel movements, incision care, physical activity, exercises and diet on pages 43-54 of your **Heart Surgery: A Guide for Patients and their Loved Ones** book.

You can also go online to the WRHN @ Queen's Blvd website to read the book:  
<https://www.smgh.ca/areas-of-care/cardiac-care/cardiac-surgery/heartsurgerybookletaodaseptember-2023.pdf>