

**The Florence Wormald  
Heart & Vascular Institute**

# **HEART SURGERY PATIENT GUIDE**



# WELCOME

On behalf of the Florence Wormald Heart & Vascular Institute at St. Elizabeth, we welcome you and your family to our cardiac surgery program. We are honored that you chose us to be your partner in caring for your heart.

The thought of having heart surgery can be overwhelming. To help ease your mind, we want to ensure that every member of our team is dedicated to providing you the best care possible. We are right here for you every step of the way throughout your journey.

## How to Use this Guide

This booklet is designed to give you and your loved ones a better understanding of what to expect before, during and after your procedure - as well as the important role you play in your recovery.

The information is intended to be generic and suitable for most heart surgery patients - it does not replace medical advice.

Bring this guide with you to your future appointments, to the hospital on the day of your surgery and to your post-op visit. If you have questions that are not addressed in this book, please write them down and discuss them with your physician. We recommend that you keep it as a resource for at least the first year after your surgery.

Thank you for trusting your heart to St. Elizabeth.

## Your St. Elizabeth Cardiac Surgery Team

### SPECIAL NOTE

You will notice that some instructions vary depending on whether you had a conventional sternotomy or a minimally invasive endoscopic procedure.



## St. Elizabeth Cardiac Surgeons (859) 301-9010

**Florence Wormald**

**Heart & Vascular Institute at St. Elizabeth**

711 Medical Village Drive, Suite 310  
Edgewood, KY 41017

Office Hours:

Monday-Thursday: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.  
Friday: 7:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

*Calls made to the office after business hours or on the weekends, will be forwarded to the nurse triage line for further assistance.*

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# PREOPERATIVE ACTIONS

## Pre-admission testing (PAT)

You are required to have certain medical evaluations done prior to your procedure; this is called pre-admission testing. The cardiac surgery office will schedule you an appointment for this testing one to two weeks before your procedure.

This visit can take two to three hours to complete depending on your medical history, but it is a necessary step in ensuring your health and safety before you undergo surgery.

### What to expect at your PAT appointment

- Chest x-ray to get a baseline picture of your lungs.
- An electrocardiogram (EKG), a noninvasive screening to show how your heart is working.
- Blood work to get a baseline for important blood values.
- Conversation with Anesthesia department to discuss your surgical history.

## Current medications

It is vital for your surgeon to be aware of ALL your medications. Make a list of everything that you are taking and bring it to all your appointments and on the day of surgery. This includes any over-the-counter products, vitamins and herbal supplements. Be sure to include the name, dosage and how often you take them.

**Your surgeon will let you know if you should stop taking any specific medications prior to surgery and when you should stop taking them.**

## Advance directives

If you don't have them already, consider completing advance directives prior to your admission. This includes a Living Will and Durable Power of Attorney for Healthcare. These forms help ensure that your wishes are carried out should you become unable to communicate temporarily or permanently.



Scan to learn more about Advance Care Planning.



## Tobacco use

Quitting tobacco for good is one of the best things you can do for your heart health and overall well-being. If you are a smoker, you should stop as soon as you know that you'll need surgery. Tobacco use can hinder your recovery, including slow wound healing, infection and poor outcomes.

If you would like help, St. Elizabeth offers Freedom from Smoking - a FREE 7-week tobacco cessation program developed by the American Lung Association.



For more information about Freedom from Smoking, scan or call **(859) 301-5570.**



 **MyChart**

If you don't currently have a MyChart account, ask the office staff to help you set one up. With MyChart, you can safely connect to your health information, including appointment scheduling, view test and lab results, request medication refills and much more.



# PREPARING FOR YOUR SURGERY

## Preparing your home for recovery

- You will need to keep track of certain vital signs when you get home; you must have the following items:
  - Blood pressure/pulse monitor
  - Thermometer
  - Bathroom scale
- You will only be allowed to take daily showers for 6 weeks after surgery – no baths or submerging your body in water. If you're unable to stand while taking a shower, you may want to make alternate bathing arrangements or consider using a shower chair.
- You'll need to use a clean washcloth and towel for your daily showers, be sure to have plenty on hand.
- When you leave the hospital, you'll have new medications. You may want to consider using a pill organizer with a.m. and p.m. compartments to help keep you on track.
- Arrange for transportation home from the hospital and to your follow-up appointments. You'll be restricted from driving for two to four weeks.

## 1-2 weeks before surgery

Report any of the following symptoms to your surgeon immediately:

- Fever or flu-like symptoms
- Breathing problems
- Exposure to COVID or any viral illness
- Open cuts, abrasions, rashes or sores
- Changes in medications
- Tooth pain or infection
- Bug bites
- Urinary infections
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Sore Throat
- Any changes to your current health status

## 1 day before surgery

- If you haven't done so already - stop smoking, vaping and use of smokeless tobacco products.
- DO NOT clip, shave or wax body hair from the neck down.
- DO NOT drink any alcohol, wine or beer.
- DO NOT eat, drink or chew anything after midnight or as advised by your surgeon.
- Pack a small bag containing personal items.

## What to pack

- This booklet and your list of medications
- Insurance card and photo ID
- Advance directive documents, if you have them
- Personal toiletries
- Eyeglasses, with case
- Hearing aids
- Dentures (*these will be removed prior to surgery; a container will be provided*)
- 2-3 changes of comfortable, loose-fitting clothing
- Women should bring a supportive bra
- CPAP machine and settings

## DO NOT bring valuables

(money, credit cards, check book, jewelry, etc.)

## Important notice

If you choose to bring a cell phone, tablet or laptop, please be advised that St. Elizabeth cannot be held responsible for any lost, stolen or damaged items.





# MORNING OF SURGERY

## Arrival

### Plan to arrive at the hospital by 5:15 a.m.

- Brush your teeth but do not swallow any water.
- Take the medications that you were approved to take with a small sip of water.
- Shower with Hibiclens® antibacterial skin cleanser provided to you at your PAT appointment.
- Do NOT wear nail polish, makeup, perfume, cologne, lotion, powder, deodorant or other hair and body products.
- Remove all jewelry, body piercings, hair clips, pins or bands.
- If you wear a wig or hairpiece, you will be asked to remove it before surgery.



## Admissions

- Enter the St. Elizabeth Edgewood Hospital through the revolving doors at the **3A Patient Entrance**.
- See an associate at one of the **Check-In Kiosks** to register for your procedure.
- Take the North Elevator to the second floor, go to the **Same Day Surgery** desk to verify your insurance and personal information.

You will need to provide a phone number for a designated spokesperson; this individual will receive regular status updates throughout your surgery.

## Same Day Surgery department

You will be escorted to a holding area where you will change into a hospital gown. A surgery technician will sanitize your skin and clip any body hair.

### DO NOT SHAVE YOURSELF AT HOME.

An IV will be started for administration of medications and anesthesia. Your family member or loved one will then be accompanied back and can remain with you until you go to surgery. You will need to give them any dentures, hearing aids or glasses for safe keeping.

You will then be seen by your anesthesiologist - they will discuss anesthesia options, decide on the best technique for you and answer any questions you may have.

## While you're in surgery

Your spokesperson and other loved ones will be directed to a surgery waiting area. They will be notified when you go on the cardiopulmonary heart-lung machine (on bypass) and again when you're off the machine (off bypass). The average surgery length is three to four hours for patients having coronary bypasses and five to six hours for those undergoing valve surgery. Each patient's case is different, surgery times can vary.

During this waiting period, your loved ones can visit the Cafeteria located on the Ground Level of the hospital, it is open every day from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m.

## Immediately following surgery

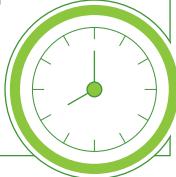
Upon completion of the surgery, your surgeon will meet with your loved ones to discuss the details of your surgery, your condition and answer any questions.

## Visitors

When you are settled in, the nurse will let your loved ones know that they can see you. Only two visitors will be allowed in the room at a time. It is important for everyone to understand that you need time to rest and rebuild strength. Those visiting should be in good health and over the age of 14.

## Visiting hours are from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m.

Your spokesperson can call the CVSICU at **(859) 301-2340** for a condition report 24 hours a day.





# POST SURGERY

## Cardiovascular Surgical ICU (CVSICU)

After surgery, you will be transferred to the CVSICU, you will remain in this unit until discharge. While in the CVSICU, you will receive the highest level of constant cardiac monitoring. This team is specially trained to care for you during this critical time.

## Tubes and monitoring

As you wake, you will likely have a breathing tube in your throat. It will be removed when you are awake enough to breathe on your own and it's safe to do so.

You will be connected to many monitoring lines, IV pumps and drainage tubes when you get out of surgery. Chest tubes are in place to drain blood and extra fluid from the surgical site, they are typically removed in one to three days. You'll also have a catheter in your bladder to drain urine, this will remain in place for one to two days.

You will have an IV line in your arm or hand for fluids and pain medicine. There may also be an IV in your neck for fluids and medicines, and to measure pressures inside your heart. You will have an arterial line in your wrist (radial artery) to monitor your blood pressure and draw blood.

## Breathing exercises

After the breathing tube is removed, you will be given a breathing exercise device called an incentive spirometer. You will be encouraged to use this device several times every hour while you're awake followed by coughing exercises.

A special pillow will be provided for splinting and protecting your chest incision while coughing. These breathing exercises help to re-expand your lungs after surgery, clear phlegm and aid in preventing pneumonia.

## Managing pain

Some pain is to be expected after surgery; but the intensity varies by patient. You will be given pain medicine on a regular schedule, don't be hesitant to tell your nurse if it isn't working.

## Preventing blood clots

All heart surgery patients are at a greater risk of having blood clots. To lessen the risk, early mobility is very important. You'll wear specially designed compression stockings to help promote blood flow to your legs and prevent swelling.

When your vital signs are stable, you will be encouraged to move around. To start, your nurse will help you from the bed to a chair. As you become more stable, a staff member will assist you in short walks around the CVSICU.

## Protecting your chest

### (For sternotomy patients)

During your surgery, your sternum (breastbone) is divided down the middle. The bone is then wired back together with stainless steel or titanium wire and /or sternal plating, these will remain in your body for the rest of your life. Your breastbone will take 6-12 weeks to completely heal.

To avoid excessive stress to the sternum, your nurse will teach you how to:

- Move properly while protecting your incision.
- Get in and out of bed without using your arms.
- Stand up and sit down in a chair without putting pressure on your arms.

## Lump above incision

### (For sternotomy patients)

You will have a lump at the top of your chest incision, this is normal. It is due to swelling from the surgical closure and will gradually return to normal over the next few months.





## POSSIBLE ADVERSE EVENTS

### Atrial fibrillation (AFib)

AFib is an irregular heartbeat caused by an electrical problem in the heart's top chambers, causing your heart rhythm to be faster or slower than normal. According to the American Heart Association, AFib is the most common complication after heart surgery. The exact cause is not always known.

While in the hospital, you will be monitored closely for any abnormalities in your heart rhythm. In most cases AFib is temporary; it can develop 2-3 days after the procedure and typically goes away within six weeks.

If AFib is detected, a treatment plan is put in place to restore your heart rhythm to normal as soon as possible. Medications are commonly used to treat AFib, your physician will select the best option suited to your unique needs.

### Leg swelling

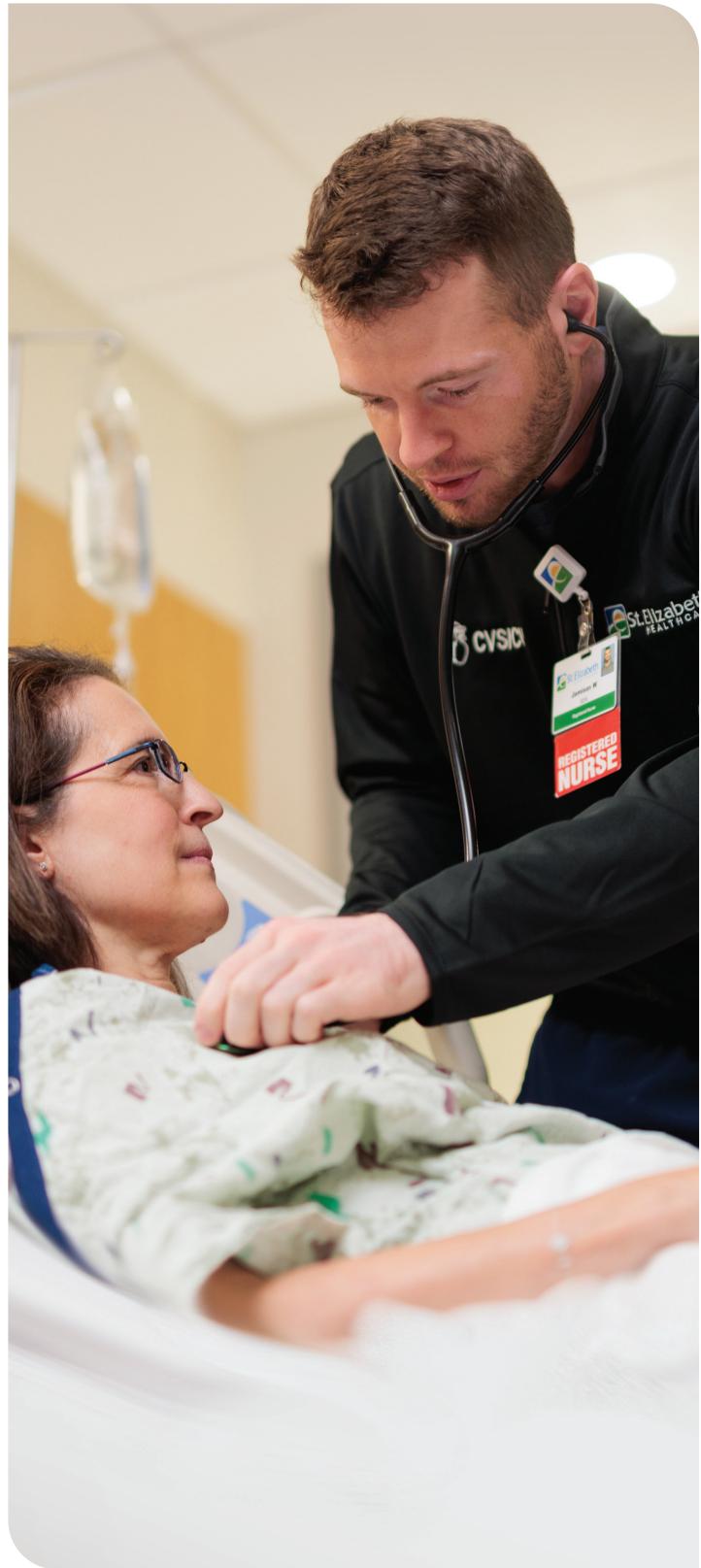
Leg swelling is very common after heart surgery, especially for bypass patients who had a vein removed from their leg. The leg with the incision may swell more than the other one. You may notice some numbness or tingling at the bottom of the incision.

To reduce leg swelling, it is important to:

- Keep your legs elevated (above your heart) while resting.
- Wear your compression stockings (TED stockings) during the day.
- Walk multiple times a day.

### Constipation

Constipation can occur due to side effects of anesthesia, inactivity and narcotic pain medications. We recommend using an over-the-counter laxative if needed, such as Miralax®.





# DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS

## Planning to go home

Your surgeon will determine when it's safe for you to be released from the hospital based on how well you are healing. The team works closely with you and your caregiver to discuss the type of care you will need to successfully transition home, including any special services or equipment.

If additional rehabilitation options are required, your care coordinator will discuss inpatient and outpatient resources with you and help make those arrangements. Your placement options may be limited due to your insurance or bed availability.

The goal is to create a realistic plan that meets your recovery needs and lessens your chance of having to return to the hospital.

**We highly recommend having someone stay with you for the first few days after you get home.**

## Transportation

Although the time can vary, we aim to have you discharged by 11 a.m. on the day you go home. Please be sure to arrange for someone to collect you from the hospital.

## After visit summary

At the end of your hospital stay, you will receive an after-visit summary with detailed discharge instructions, including scheduled follow-up appointments. Your nurse will carefully go over all these points with you and your caregiver before you leave the hospital.

This will include special notes about at-home care, prescriptions and details about your surgery. You will also receive a two-week daily home care log along with instructions for charting daily tasks and vitals.

We understand that you'll be very anxious to get home - but please be sure to pay attention to this information, ask questions and take notes if needed.



## Incision care packet

Proper wound care is an important part of your recovery. Over the following 2 weeks you'll need to take care of your incisions to reduce the risk of infection and promote healing. Before leaving the hospital, your nurse will show you how to properly clean your incisions. You will receive a care packet with instructions and a generous supply of betadine swabs.

## Discharge medications

You will be prescribed multiple new medications after your surgery; the Pharmacy Department will deliver them to your room before you leave so you don't miss a dose when you get home.

Details for all your prescriptions will be noted in your after-visit summary along with instructions on any previous medications you should stop or continue taking.

Take all medications as prescribed by your surgeon and only take the medications listed in your discharge paperwork.





# RECOVERY AT HOME

## Incision care

Until your incision is fully healed:

- ⚠ DO NOT take a bath, go swimming or sit in a hot tub or sauna.
- ⚠ DO NOT apply any lotions, creams, oils, powders or ointments to your incision area
- ⚠ Keep pets away from your incision to prevent an increased risk of infection.
- ⚠ DO NOT smoke! Smoking will delay the healing of your wound and increases your risk of developing an infection.

Numbness and itching along the incision are a normal part of the healing process.

Shower every day, using an antibacterial soap and a clean washcloth. Allow your incision to air dry or gently pat with a clean towel. Once dry, use a new betadine swab for each incision site.

You may experience minimal drainage from a leg incision or old chest tube site, but **ANY DRAINAGE FROM YOUR CHEST INCISION IS ABNORMAL;** please call your surgeon immediately!



## Warning Signs of Incision Infection

Examine your incisions daily and notify your surgeon if you experience any of the following:

- Redness, swelling or warmth at the incision site.
- Drainage that is yellow, green or pus-like.
- Increasing pain or tenderness around the incision.
- Fever higher than 101° or above.



## Discomfort

It is common to experience mild amounts of discomfort throughout your healing process, but only take pain medication as needed. You can take Tylenol for general aches and pains. **DO NOT use ibuprofen after surgery as it may increase your risk of bleeding complications.**

## Numbness & skin sensitivity

You may experience temporary numbness, tingling and aching in your fingers; this is caused by the stretching of your chest during surgery and should gradually improve over the next few months. Many patients notice hypersensitivity of the skin around their incision as well as numbness, tenderness and muscle tightness on the sides of their chest, this is normal and improves as the wound heals.

## Irritated throat

Due to the insertion of the breathing tube, you may have a sore, scratchy throat for several weeks as well as some hoarseness in your voice.

## Changes in appetite

Temporary changes to your sense of taste are common after heart surgery. During recovery, eat what you can tolerate, focus on hydration and protein. When your appetite returns to normal, you should follow a heart-healthy diet.

## Sleeping & napping

Your sleep routine may temporarily change after surgery due to discomfort, inactivity or anxiety. You may find that you tire very easily, take short naps if needed but do not sleep too much during the day.

### (For sternotomy patients)

You will need to sleep flat on your back until your breastbone has healed. Sleeping in a recliner or using extra pillows may help.

### (For minimally invasive patients)

Sleep however you are most comfortable.

## Mental health

Heart surgery is a big deal - it's not uncommon to have feelings of anger, fear or sadness afterwards. Recovery isn't just physical; it can challenge you emotionally too.

Depression and anxiety can slow your body's healing process, if you're struggling to feel okay after surgery, don't hesitate to ask for help.

## Fluid restrictions

Excess water in the bloodstream makes your heart work harder to pump. Limit your fluids to 80-100 ounces per day for the first week.



# ACTIVITY GUIDELINES

## Basic activities

The recovery period after you return home can vary with each person but in general – it's slow and gradual. It's important to remember that you just had major surgery, you will feel stronger every day but, in the beginning, even the simplest tasks may leave you feeling tired. Keep things in moderation and when you are tired, rest!

## Lifting

**(For sternotomy patients)** - Avoid lifting, pushing or pulling anything heavier than eight pounds (about a gallon of milk) for eight to 12 weeks.

**(For minimally invasive patients)** - Refrain from lifting over 20 pounds for the first 2 weeks.

**Climbing stairs** - Stairs are safe to use after surgery, but not as exercise. Use the handrail for support or to balance yourself, not for pulling.

**Sexual activity** - You may resume sexual relations when you feel comfortable, for many people this is two to four weeks after discharge.

**Driving** - You are not permitted to drive for two to four weeks or until you obtain permission from your doctor. This may be longer if you're taking any pain medications.

**House cleaning** - Avoid strenuous household chores such as vacuuming, sweeping, mopping, scrubbing, laundry, taking out the trash or carrying grocery bags.

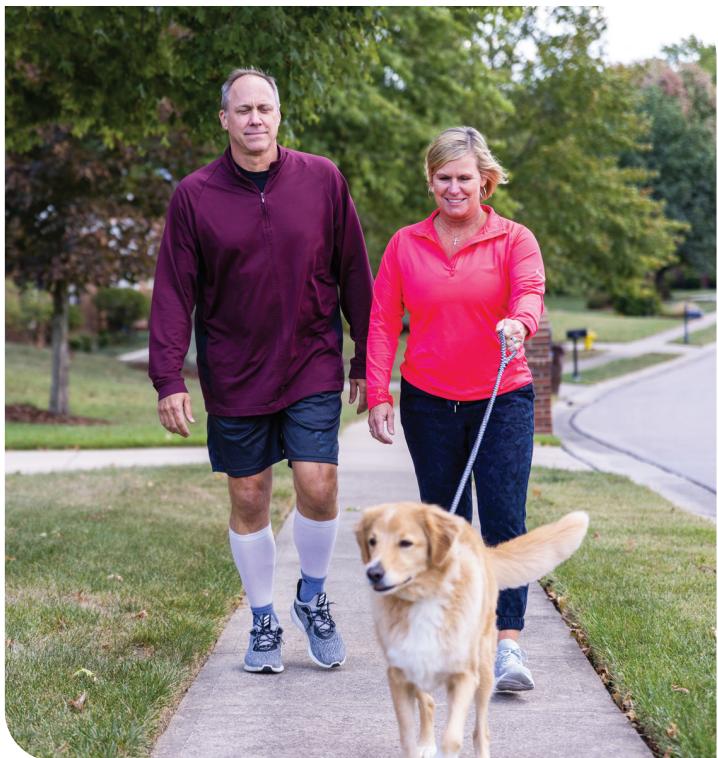
**Yard work** - Avoid outdoor chores such as raking, mowing, chopping, digging, gardening and snow shoveling.

**Return to work** - Returning to work will depend on your recovery and the demands of your job. Discuss this with your physician at your post-op visit.

## Walking

When you get home from the hospital, walking will be your main exercise. Walking can help you recover faster after surgery - it improves your strength, helps with blood flow, lung function, increases energy and gets you back to feeling like yourself a lot sooner.

**YOUR GOAL:** To be walking a total of 30 to 40 minutes every day by 6 weeks after surgery.



To get the best results from your walking program:

- Begin at a comfortable pace:** Think about how far you walked in the hospital and use that as a guide for starting your walks at home.
- Listen to your body:** Take breaks when needed and move safely to protect your incisions.
- Talk to someone:** Use your breathing to guide how hard you're exercising. You should be able to carry on a normal conversation.
- Warm up and cool down:** Do some gentle movements before and after you walk. This will allow your heart and breathing rates to increase slowly beforehand and decrease slowly afterwards.
- Take your pulse:** It's important that your heart rate does not increase to more than 20 to 30 beats per minute above your resting heart rate.



# CARDIAC REHABILITATION

Cardiac rehabilitation is a specially designed outpatient program for heart patients. This carefully supervised exercise and education program plays an important part in your recovery and establishing an ongoing healthy lifestyle.

You should be contacted by a member of the cardiac rehab team after your one-week follow up appointment with your surgeon. Based on your individual needs, your surgeon will recommend that you participate in this program for four to 12 weeks, with three one-hour sessions each week.

## What to expect

- A workout routine including various exercise equipment for all skill levels.
- All activity is supervised by a registered nurse and an exercise physiologist.
- Throughout each exercise session, your heart's activity will be closely monitored.
- Learning opportunities to help you understand your heart condition and reduce the risk of developing future heart problems, including home exercise, nutrition, stress management, weight loss, cholesterol and blood pressure education.
- Our staff will share any concerns with your physician.

## Benefits

- Speeds up healing after heart surgery or other cardiovascular procedures.
- Strengthens heart and lungs.
- Increased muscular strength, endurance and flexibility.
- Improves daily activities and quality of life.
- Provides social opportunities with people experiencing similar health issues.

## Insurance

Most insurance plans, including Medicare, do cover costs related to this type of program. Insurance policies do vary, please check with your carrier for details regarding your plan's coverage.

### St. Elizabeth Cardiac Rehabilitation locations

#### Dearborn

600 Wilson Creek Road  
Lawrenceburg, IN 47025  
**(812) 496-7254**

#### Edgewood

711 Medical Village Drive  
Edgewood, KY 41017  
**(859) 301-3600**

#### Ft. Thomas

85 North Grand Avenue  
Ft. Thomas, KY 41075  
**(859) 572-3382**

#### Grant

300 Barnes Road  
Williamstown, KY 41097  
**(859) 824-8244**





# HEART DISEASE PREVENTION

**Cardiovascular disease is consistently ranked as the leading cause of death in the U.S.**

Studies suggest that the highest risk factors for developing heart disease are factors that can be controlled.

Therefore, a large percentage of heart disease cases can be prevented by changing unhealthy behaviors.

## Understanding risk factors

Risk factors are characteristics or conditions that increase the likelihood of a person developing a disease or health disorder. There are two types of risk factors:

### **Non-modifiable risk factors (things you CAN'T control):**

These include age, genetics, gender, race and family history. While these factors do raise your risk of developing a heart-related issue, they don't guarantee it.

### **Modifiable risk factors (things you CAN control):**

These are behaviors or conditions that can be altered. Modifiable risk factors play a critical role in the prevention and management of serious chronic diseases.



## TAKE TIME *for* YOUR HEART

Take Time for Your Heart is a free prevention and wellness program developed by St. Elizabeth cardiologists and clinical experts. This program addresses several modifiable factors that have been proven to increase the risk for many chronic health issues, including heart disease, stroke, diabetes, hypertension, obesity, dementia and some cancers.



Over the next few pages of this booklet, you'll discover a small look into Take Time for Your Heart content. To learn more and to access the full program series, scan or visit [stelizabeth.com/time4heart](http://stelizabeth.com/time4heart).

The Take Time for Your Heart program includes tips, tools and resources so you can:

- Regulate Your Blood Pressure
- Control Blood Sugar
- Decrease Sodium
- Achieve a Healthy Weight
- Manage Your Medications
- Stop Tobacco
- Enjoy the Mediterranean Diet
- Manage Cholesterol
- Improve Eating Habits
- Be More Active
- Transform Your Sleep
- Reduce Stress
- Ditch Vaping and Other Tobacco Products
- Help Save a Life



## Regulate your blood pressure

Blood pressure is the force of blood against the artery walls as the heart pumps and when it relaxes. A blood pressure reading is recorded by two numbers:

### **SYSTOLIC** (top number):

When the heart muscle contracts

### **DIASTOLIC** (bottom number):

When the heart muscle relaxes

High blood pressure is when the force of the blood is consistently too high, this can damage the artery lining and increase your risk for heart attack, heart failure, stroke and kidney disease.

## Treatment & Prevention

Early detection and healthy lifestyle modifications are a strong defense against high blood pressure and its associated risks. This includes:



Maintaining a moderate weight



Limiting alcohol intake



Increasing physical activity



Quit smoking



Eating a heart-healthy diet



Decreasing stress

The American Heart Association divides blood pressure readings into the following categories:

LEVEL	SYSTOLIC	DIASTOLIC
Normal	<120	<80
Elevated	120-129	<80
Mild Hypertension	130-139	80-89
Moderate Hypertension	140+	90+
Hypertensive Crisis	180+	120+

## Manage cholesterol

Cholesterol is a waxy fat that's found in every cell of your body. The liver naturally makes about 80% of the cholesterol in the blood stream, the remaining 20% comes from our diet. When you eat certain foods, your body has more cholesterol than it needs. This allows fatty deposits to build up, narrowing the arteries and restricting blood flow. This increases the chances for a blocked blood vessel to the heart or brain, causing a heart attack or stroke.

Being mindful of the types of food you eat and choosing healthy fats (focus on avoiding saturated fats), will play a big part in keeping cholesterol in check.

## Food choices you can make to keep your cholesterol levels in a healthy range:

- **Include more protein-rich & high fiber foods in your diet.**
- **Eat plenty of colorful fruits and vegetables.**
- **Limit processed or pre-packaged foods.**
- **Select wholegrain breads, cereal, pasta, rice & noodles.**
- **Choose unsaturated fats, limit saturated fats and avoid trans fats.**
- **Replace salt by flavoring foods with herbs and spices.**



## Improve eating habits

Your diet impacts many of the main factors that determine your overall health – such as blood sugar, cholesterol, blood pressure and weight. Your body responds to the food it receives, either good or bad. All patients with heart problems are encouraged to make heart-healthy changes to their diet.

Eating right requires long-term dietary adjustments, not short-term fads. To get started, it helps to know some basic nutrition information:

- **Whole grain foods:** Avoid processed or refined grains like white bread or pasta.
- **Plant-based or lean proteins:** The body needs protein after surgery to restore muscle mass and heal. Think legumes, nuts, seeds, eggs, fish and low-fat dairy products.
- **Reduce sodium (salt):** Read food labels to avoid hidden sodium.
- **Fruits and vegetables:** They don't have to be fresh - frozen or canned versions are convenient and affordable options. Be sure to select the no-salt-added and no sugar or syrup added varieties.
- **Healthy fats:** Using non-tropical oils (olive, canola or safflower oil) in place of butter or margarine in cooking or as a salad dressing can be a life-saving switch.
- **Eat more fiber:** Fiber is an essential part of a heart-healthy diet, it helps control blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- **Avoid added sugars:** Consuming sugary drinks and food adds calories and elevates blood sugar levels.
- **Minimally processed foods:** Eat more unprocessed or minimally processed foods. This includes whole fruits and vegetables, raw nuts and seeds, whole grains, dry beans and legumes, fatty wild fish, lean poultry or meat and yogurt.



## Decrease sodium

- Sodium is a sneaky ingredient that can be found in most everyday foods. Most of the sodium that we consume doesn't come from a saltshaker, it comes from restaurants or processed foods.
- It's important to realize that some foods may not taste salty, but they can still be high in sodium. Using taste alone is not an accurate way to judge a food's sodium content. Read food labels carefully to manage your daily intake.
- The ideal sodium limit for individuals with high blood pressure, heart failure or other heart conditions is no more than 1,500 mg per day.

## Double check the sodium content of foods claiming to be:

- Unsalted
- No salt added
- Reduced sodium
- Lower sodium

They may still be high in sodium.

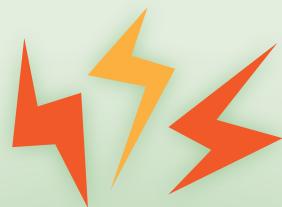


## Reduce stress

Stress is a part of life. Our bodies are well equipped to handle stress in small doses, but long-term (chronic) stress can take a toll on your mental and physical health. You can't eliminate all the stress around you, but there are coping skills that can help you de-escalate your response to stress.

## Stress Management Tips

- **Identify the source** – Understanding the root cause of your stress is the first step in managing it.
- **Engage in regular physical activity** – Repetitive movements (like walking, running, cycling, rowing and swimming) are particularly helpful in processing stress.
- **Get enough sleep** – Aiming for seven to nine hours of quality sleep each night can go a long way in boosting your resilience to stress.
- **Learn relaxation techniques** – Deep breathing exercises, practicing yoga, meditating or doing tai chi will help bring your heart rate down and still your mind.
- **Stay connected** – Loneliness has both physical and mental repercussions. Look for opportunities to engage with people. Search your community for groups to join, classes to take or places to volunteer.
- **Prioritize your time** – Learn to say “no” and focus on what's important. Ask for help when you feel overwhelmed and when possible, delegate tasks to others.



## Be more active

Your heart is a muscle. And like any muscle, the heart gets stronger with exercise. When most of your time is spent not moving your body or not moving enough, you're hurting your heart. Living an inactive lifestyle can lead to a myriad of health issues. You don't need a fancy gym membership; you just need to get up and get your body moving.



## Tips to Overcome Exercise Excuses

### *“I hate exercising.”*

There are lots of reasons why you may dread working out. It doesn't necessarily mean that you're lazy, maybe it's because you haven't found an activity that you enjoy. Try different things until you find the right fit, the important thing is to make movement a habit.

### *“I don't have time.”*

Try squeezing in short 10-minute workouts throughout the day. These “exercise snacks” can fit into the busiest of schedules, and they keep you on track.

### *“I've tried exercising, and it doesn't work.”*

Manage your expectations. You're not going to transform your body overnight. Expecting too much too soon will quickly lead to frustration. Stick with it, the payoff will come in time.



## Important Numbers

**Edgewood Main Hospital**  
(859) 301-2000

**Surgery Scheduling**  
St. Elizabeth Hospital Edgewood  
(859) 301-6000

**Pre-Admission Testing**  
St. Elizabeth Hospital Edgewood  
(859) 301-5653

**Cardiovascular Surgical**  
**Intensive Care Unit (CVSICU)**  
(859) 301-2340

**Cardiac Intensive Care Unit (CICU)**  
(859) 301-0900

**Cardiac Short Stay Unit (CSSU)**  
(859) 301-0950

**CVSICU/CICU/CSSU Nurse Manager**  
(859) 301-6650

**Social Services**  
(859) 301-0171

**Medical Village Pharmacy**  
(859) 301-9025

**Medication Management Clinic**  
*(Coumadin Clinic)*  
Edgewood (859) 301-6790  
Ft. Thomas (859) 572-3790  
Florence (859) 212-5568

**Cardiac Rehabilitation**  
Dearborn (812) 496-7254  
Edgewood (859) 301-3600  
Ft. Thomas (859) 572-3382  
Grant (859) 824-8244

**St. Elizabeth**  
**Freedom from Smoking program**  
(859) 301-5570

**Heart & Vascular**  
**Prevention and Wellness Services**  
(859) 301-9355



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