Infant (Birth to Walking)
After Heart or Chest Surgery

Thank you for choosing the MCG Children’s Medical Center for your child’s health care needs. This information is to help answer some of your questions and give you instructions to follow. If you have any other questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

It is common for the baby who has had surgery to have "up days" and "down days". It is important to treat your baby as a normal baby and return to your discipline routines.

Caring for the surgical incision and wound site
1. You may bathe your baby in the tub **seven days** after surgery.
2. Wash the incision and wound areas gently with soap and water, then pat dry. Do not let the incision area "soak" in water until it is completely healed.
3. The steri strips will fall off when ready. Two weeks after surgery any remaining steri strips may be removed by lifting the outer edges and gently pulling in toward the incision.
4. Do not use lotions, oils, powders or antiseptics on the incision for **two weeks**.
5. Put a shirt on the baby to prevent the incision from being scratched or exposed to the sun. A healing incision will sunburn easily.

Activity Instructions
1. A. **Median Sternotomy** (incision of breastbone)
   Protect breastbone from injury for **six weeks** after surgery. Protect from falls on toys or hard objects, especially if pulling up on furniture.
2. **Thoracotomy** (incision to left or right side of chest)
   Protect incision site from injury for **six weeks** after surgery, then return to normal activities as tolerated. Encourage the use of the arm on the side of the incision. A good exercise is to gently stretch the arm over the head, or have the baby reach for a pacifier or favorite toy.
3. Do not lift or swing by the arms, or "toss" in the air.
4. Avoid lifting baby under or by the arms. Lift your baby by supporting the head, back and legs. This prevents putting pressure on the chest area.
5. Keep your baby out of day care or crowds for at least **one week** after discharge. Avoid anyone with a cold or flu for the first few weeks after surgery. If returning to day care, write down physical activity limits for the caregivers.
Special Care for the Infant

1. Visit your pediatrician or primary care provider within **one to two days** after discharge for a baseline checkup.
2. Contact your pediatrician or primary care provider for any questions or problems. Your doctor will check your baby and decide if you need to see a pediatric cardiologist.
3. Delay immunizations until cleared by your pediatric cardiologist. Be sure to ask at a clinic visit when immunizations should start again.
4. Follow guidelines for prevention of bacterial endocarditis (infection in the heart) as your pediatric cardiologist recommends. (Please refer to wallet card)
5. For occasional pain or discomfort, your child may take a nonaspirin product such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin).

Notify Pediatrician or Primary Care Provider If
- Fever is 100°F or greater (if taken by mouth or under the arm) or 101°F or above (if taken rectally).
- Signs of infection at incision or wound sites (redness, swelling or pus drainage).
- More irritable than usual.
- Not eating or drinking well.
- Change in breathing (for example, too fast or too hard).
- Swelling of hands, feet or around eyes.
- Change in usual color (for example, blueness).
- "Just does not act right."