

Age 13 and up

What to Expect After Your Thoracotomy

This book will help you know what will happen each day you're in the hospital. It will also explain what you can do to get better faster.

These are goals for your recovery. Every person is different. Your experience may not follow this pathway exactly. Your doctor or nurse will tell you what to expect.



Memorial Sloan Kettering
Cancer Center

Your first name: _____

Your Care Team _____

Your doctor's name: _____

Your doctor's phone number: _____

Nurse's name: _____

Nurse's name: _____

Physical therapist's name: _____

Occupational therapist's name: _____

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What to Expect After Your Thoracotomy

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	Day of Surgery	1 Day After Surgery
What should I do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sit in your chair for 30 minutes or longer. • Do your self-care activities while you're in bed. For example, brush your teeth or wash your face in bed. • Use your incentive spirometer, pinwheel, or blow bubbles 10 or more times each hour you're awake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get out of bed 3 times today. Stay out of bed for 1 or more hour each time. • Walk outside of your room 3 or more times today. • Do your self-care activities sitting at the edge of your bed. • Sit in your chair while you eat. • Use your incentive spirometer, pinwheel, or blow bubbles 10 or more times each hour you're awake.
What procedures will I have?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will have a chest x-ray in your room. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your urinary catheter might be taken out.
What medications will I take?	<p>You will get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medicine through your epidural PCA, peripheral nerve catheter, or IV PCA. • Extra pain medicine, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol®), if you need it. • Medicine to keep your stomach from getting upset (nauseous). 	<p>You will get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medicine through your epidural PCA, peripheral nerve catheter, or IV PCA. • Extra pain medicine (such as Tylenol), if you need it. • Medicine to keep your stomach from getting upset, if you need it. • Medicine to help you go to the bathroom.
What will I do so my lung gets stronger?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every day, you will have chest physical therapy every 4 hours. • You will have physical therapy and occupational therapy. A physical therapist or occupational therapist will visit you after your surgery. They will talk with you about how often you will have physical and occupational therapy. 	

Your doctor and nurses will check your chest tube every day. They will take it out when the amount of liquid coming out of it is low enough. This might happen soon after your surgery, or it might be a few days after.

You will start getting a different kind of pain medicine that you swallow (oral pain medicine) after your chest tube is taken out. If you have an epidural or peripheral nerve catheter for your pain medicine, your doctor will take it out soon after they take out your chest tube.

Thoracotomy Pathway

2 Days After Surgery	3 Days After Surgery
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be out of bed for half of the time you're awake. • Walk 1 full lap around the nursing unit. Do this 3 or more times today. • Do your self-care activities standing at the sink. • Sit in your chair while you eat. • Use your incentive spirometer, pinwheel, or blow bubbles 10 or more times each hour you're awake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be out of bed for most of the time you're awake. • Walk 2 to 3 full laps around the nursing unit. Do this 3 or more times today. • Do your self-care activities standing at the sink. • Sit in your chair while you eat. • Change into new clothes. Ask for help, if you need it. • Use your incentive spirometer, pinwheel, or blow bubbles 10 or more times each hour you're awake.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you still have a urinary catheter, it will be taken out. 	
<p>You will get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medicine. • Extra pain medicine (such as Tylenol), if you need it. • Medicine to help you go to the bathroom. 	<p>You will get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medicine. • Extra pain medicine (such as Tylenol), if you need it. • Medicine to help you go to the bathroom.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every day, you will have chest physical therapy every 4 hours. • You will have physical therapy and occupational therapy. A physical therapist or occupational therapist will visit you after your surgery. They will talk with you about how often you will have physical and occupational therapy. 	

What to Expect After Your Thoracotomy

Age 13 and up

	4 Days After Surgery	5 Days After Surgery
What should I do?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be out of bed for almost all of the time you're awake. • Walk 10 or more full laps around the nursing unit today. • Do your self-care activities standing at the sink. • Sit in your chair while you eat. • Change into new clothes by yourself. • Use your incentive spirometer, pinwheel, or blow bubbles 10 or more times each hour you're awake. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be out of bed for almost all of the time you're awake. • Walk 10 or more full laps around the nursing unit today. • Do your self-care activities standing at the sink. • Sit in your chair while you eat. • Change into new clothes by yourself. • Use your incentive spirometer, pinwheel, or blow bubbles 10 or more times each hour you're awake.
What procedures will I have?		
What pain medicine will I take?	<p>You will get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medicine, if you need it. 	<p>You will get:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pain medicine, if you need it.
What will I do so my lung gets stronger?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every day, you will have chest physical therapy every 4 hours. • You will have physical therapy and occupational therapy. A physical therapist or occupational therapist will visit you after your surgery. They will talk with you about how often you will have physical and occupational therapy. 	

Notes

What to Expect After Your Thoracotomy

Age 13 and up

What can I eat?

The day of your surgery, you will start out only drinking liquids. During that day, you will slowly try eating solid foods.

On the day after your surgery, you will keep trying solid foods so you can get back to eating like usual.

What is an incentive spirometer?

An incentive spirometer is a tool that helps exercise your lungs.

To use your incentive spirometer, you breathe with your mouth on the tube. First, take a slow, deep breath in. Then, breathe out like normal. Try to use your incentive spirometer 10 times each hour you're awake.

Your doctor might ask you to blow bubbles or blow on a pinwheel instead of using an incentive spirometer.



Using an incentive spirometer

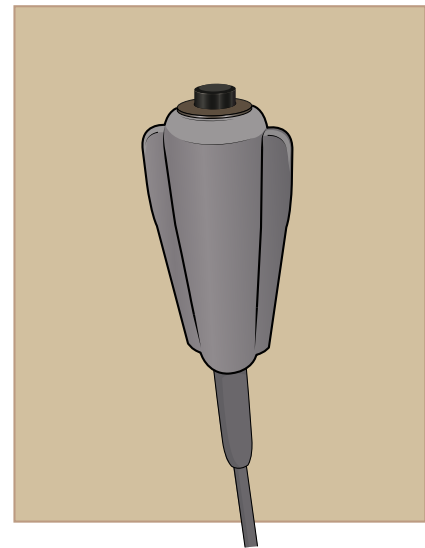
How can I get my medicine for pain?

There are different ways you can get your medicine for pain. The way you get your medicine is based on the kind of medicine you have.

Ask your mom, dad, doctor, or nurse what kind of pain medicine you have. You might have more than one kind! Here are the different kinds of pain medicine you can have:

- **Epidural pain medicine:** Your medicine will be put into your back through a small tube. The tube will be close to your spine. The tube is called an epidural catheter.
- **Peripheral nerve catheter:** This is also called a nerve block. Your medicine will be put close to the cut from your surgery through a small tube. The tube is called a peripheral nerve catheter.
- **IV pain medicine:** Your medicine will be put into your blood through a small tube. The tube is called an IV line.
- **Oral pain medicine:** You will swallow your medicine. It might be a liquid that you drink, or it might be a pill that you swallow.

If you have epidural pain medicine or IV pain medicine, you might use a PCA to help you take your medicine. A PCA is a button that will give you medicine for pain. You can ask your mom, dad, or a nurse to press your PCA button.



A PCA button

What to Expect After Your Thoracotomy

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What will happen during physical therapy?

Physical therapy is also called PT.

During physical therapy, your physical therapist will help you move around. They will help you with things like getting out of bed, walking, and going up and down stairs. They will make sure you're safe while you're moving around.

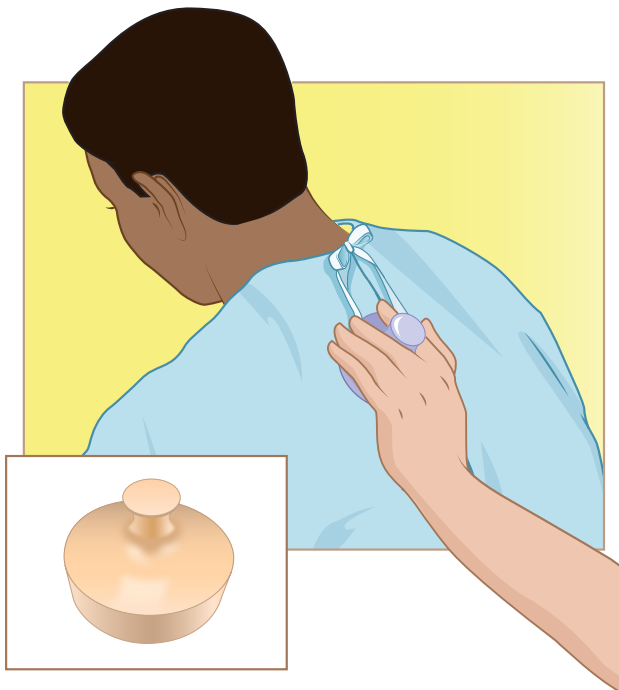
Your physical therapist will also help you make your lungs stronger. To do this, they will help you use your incentive spirometer and take deep breaths.

You might have physical therapy in your room, or you might go to another place close by.

What will happen during chest physical therapy?

Chest physical therapy is also called chest PT.

During chest PT, a nurse or physical therapist will visit your room. While they're there, they will tap on your back with a special tool that's shaped like a circle. This will help you cough and clear out your lungs.



Getting chest PT

What will happen during occupational therapy?

Occupational therapy is also called OT.

During occupational therapy, your occupational therapist will help you get back to doing the things you do for fun. These could be things like drawing or playing a game.

Your occupational therapist will also help you get back to doing your self-care activities. Self-care activities are the things you do to take care of yourself, like brushing your teeth or washing your face.

You might have occupational therapy in your room, or you might go to another place close by.

What is a nebulizer treatment?

A nebulizer treatment is also called a breathing treatment.

Sometimes, your doctor or nurse will ask you to use a breathing treatment. For your breathing treatment, you will breathe in a white mist. The mist has medicine to help your lungs heal. It will also help you breathe better.

There are 2 ways you can breathe the mist.

- You can breathe the mist from a mask that covers your nose and mouth. Look at the picture [on the right] to see what the mask looks like.
- You can breathe the mist from a long blue tube that you hold close to your nose and mouth.



Using a mask for your breathing treatment

What to Expect After Your Thoracotomy

Age 13 and up

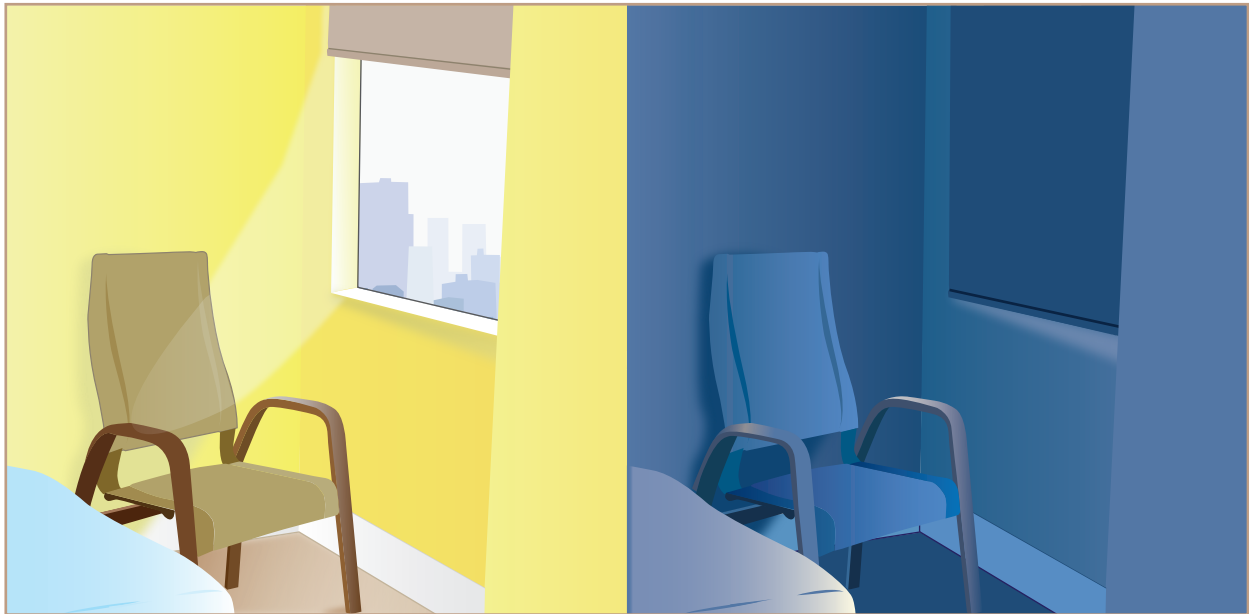
When will my chest tube be taken out?

Your chest tube will be taken out when your lung is ready. This could happen any day after your surgery.

Every day, your doctor and nurses will look at how much liquid is coming out of your chest tube. When there's only a little bit of liquid coming out, your lung will be ready for your chest tube to be taken out. This might be soon after your surgery, or it might be a few days after.

How can I sleep well?

During the day, keep the shades open to let light into your room. At night, turn off the lights and keep your room quiet.



Open your shades during the day, and close your shades at night.

How can I know what's happening around me?

Every day, talk about what day it is and what room you're in. Say the names of your family, your doctors, and your nurses.

When can I go home?

You can go home when your lung is better. You will know you are ready to go home when:

- Your chest tube is taken out.
- You can eat your normal foods.
- You are only taking pain medicine that you swallow.

The Day of Your Surgery

What should I do?

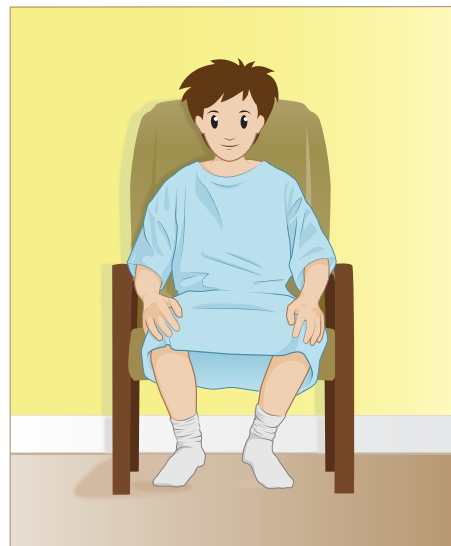
- Move from your bed to your chair. Sit in your chair for 30 minutes or longer.
- Do your self-care activities sitting up in your bed.
- Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles. Do this 10 or more times every hour you're awake.

What can I do in my chair?

You can do lots of things in your chair!

You can:

- Sit and relax.
- Watch TV.
- Read a book.
- Play a video game.
- Play a game.
- Do a craft.



Sitting in your chair

Someone from Child Life Services will visit your room every day. They can give you even more ideas. You can also ask your mom, dad, or nurse to call them. Their phone number is 212-639-8285.

What are self-care activities?

Self-care activities are the things you do to take care of yourself. Some examples are brushing your teeth and washing your face.

The Day of Your Surgery (continued)

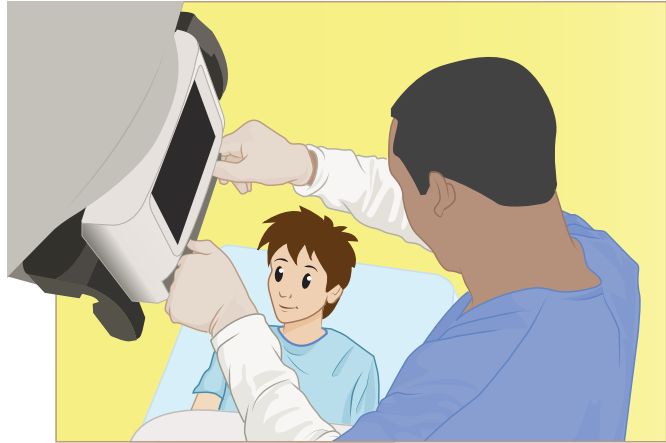
What should I do?

You will have a chest x-ray in your room.

What is an x-ray?

An x-ray is a special picture of the inside of your body.

A person will bring the x-ray machine into your room to take a picture while you're lying in bed.



Getting a chest x-ray

What medicine will I take?

You will take pain medicine.

- You will get pain medicine through your epidural catheter, IV line, or peripheral nerve catheter.
- You might have a PCA to help you take your pain medicine.
- You will get extra pain medicine, such as acetaminophen, if you need it.

You will also take medicine to keep your stomach from getting upset (nauseous).

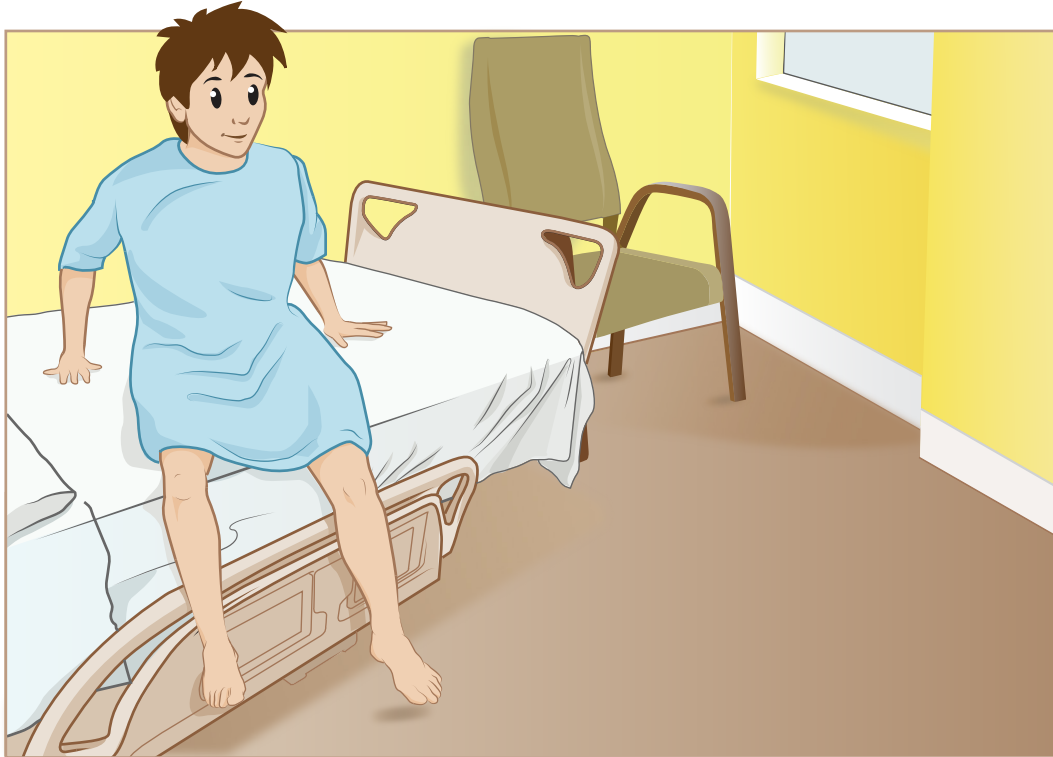
What will I do so my lung gets stronger?

- You will get out of your bed. Someone will come to your room to help you.
- You will have chest PT every 4 hours.
- Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles.

1 Day After Your Surgery

What should I do?

- Get out of bed 3 times today. Stay out of bed for 1 hour or longer each time.
- Walk outside of your room 3 or more times today.
- Do your self-care activities sitting at the edge of your bed.
- Sit in your chair while you eat.
- Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles. Do this 10 or more times every hour you're awake.



Getting out of bed

What procedures will I have?

- Your urinary catheter may be taken out. This is the tube that helps you go to the bathroom.
- Your chest tube will be taken out if your lung is ready.
- If you have an epidural catheter, it will be taken out after your chest tube is taken out.

1 Day After Your Surgery (continued)

What medicine will I take?

You will take pain medicine.

- You will get pain medicine through your epidural catheter, IV line, or peripheral nerve catheter.
- You might have a PCA to help you take your pain medicine.
- If your chest tube is taken out, your pain medicine will be changed to pain medicine that you swallow.
- You will get extra pain medicine (such as Tylenol) if you need it.



Washing your face at the edge of your bed

You will also take other kinds of medicine. You will take:

- Medicine to help you go to the bathroom.
- Medicine to keep your stomach from getting upset (nauseous), if you need it.

2 Days After Your Surgery

What should I do?

- Be out of bed for half of the time you're awake.
- Walk 1 full lap around the unit. Do this 3 or more times today.
- Do your self-care activities standing at the sink.
- Sit in your chair while you eat.
- Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles. Do this 10 or more times every hour you're awake.



Brushing your teeth

2 Days After Your Surgery (continued)

What procedures will I have?

- If you still have a urinary catheter, it will be taken out. This is the tube that helps you go to the bathroom.
 - Your chest tube will be taken out if your lung is ready.
 - If you have an epidural catheter, it will be taken out after your chest tube is taken out.
-

What medicine will I take?

You will take pain medicine.

- When your chest tube is taken out, your pain medicine will be changed to pain medicine that you swallow.
- You will get extra pain medicine (such as Tylenol) if you need it.

You will also take medicine to help you go to the bathroom.

What will I do so my lung gets stronger?

- You may have physical therapy, occupational therapy, or both.
- You will have chest physical therapy every 4 hours.
- Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles.

3 Days After Your Surgery

What should I do?

- Be out of bed for most of the time you're awake.
 - Walk 2 to 3 laps around the unit. Do this 3 or more times today.
 - Do your self-care activities standing at the sink.
 - Sit in your chair while you eat.
 - Change into new pajamas or clothes. You can ask your mom or dad for help.
 - Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles. Do this 10 or more times every hour you're awake.
-

What procedures will I have?

- Your chest tube will be taken out if your lung is ready.
 - If you have an epidural catheter, it will be taken out after your chest tube is taken out.
-

What medicine will I take?

You will take pain medicine.

- When your chest tube is taken out, your pain medicine will be changed to pain medicine that you swallow.
- You will get extra pain medicine (such as Tylenol) if you need it.

You will also take medicine to help you go to the bathroom.

3 Days After Your Surgery (continued)

What will I do so my lung gets stronger?

- You may have physical therapy, occupational therapy, or both.
- You will have chest physical therapy every 4 hours.
- Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles.



Walking around the unit

4 Days After Your Surgery

What should I do?

- Be out of bed for almost all of the time you're awake.
 - Walk 10 or more laps around the unit today.
 - Do your self-care activities standing at the sink.
 - Sit in your chair while you eat.
 - Change into new pajamas or clothes by yourself.
 - Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles. Do this 10 or more times every hour you're awake.
-

What procedures will I have?

- Your chest tube will be taken out if your lung is ready.
 - If you have an epidural catheter, it will be taken out after your chest tube is taken out.
-

What medicine will I take?

You will take pain medicine.

- When your chest tube is taken out, your pain medicine will be changed to pain medicine that you swallow.
- You will slowly start taking less pain medicine. You will still take pain medicine that you swallow, if you need it.

4 Days After Your Surgery (continued)

What will I do so my lung gets stronger?

- You may have physical therapy, occupational therapy, or both.
- You will have chest physical therapy every 4 hours.
- Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles.



Changing into new clothes

5 Days After Your Surgery

What should I do?

- Be out of bed for almost all of the time you're awake.
- Walk 10 or more laps around the unit today.
- Do your self-care activities standing at the sink.
- Sit in your chair while you eat.
- Change into new pajamas or clothes by yourself.
- Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles. Do this 10 or more times every hour you're awake.



Washing your face in the sink

5 Days After Your Surgery (continued)

What procedures will I have?

- Your chest tube will be taken out if your lung is ready.
 - If you have an epidural catheter, it will be taken out after your chest tube is taken out.
-

What medicine will I take?

You will take pain medicine.

- When your chest tube is taken out, your pain medicine will be changed to pain medicine that you swallow.
 - You will slowly start taking less pain medicine. You will still take pain medicine that you swallow, if you need it.
-

What will I do so my lung gets stronger?

- You may have physical therapy, occupational therapy, or both.
- You will have chest physical therapy every 4 hours.
- Use your incentive spirometer or pinwheel or blow bubbles.

**If you stay in the hospital for longer than 5 days, that's OK!
You can keep following the instructions on these pages.
If you have questions, ask your mom, dad, doctor, or nurse.**

What to Expect After Your Thoracotomy

Age 13 and up

Move Around!

Read the directions in each box. Put a sticker or X in the box after you follow the directions.

Day of Surgery	Move from your bed to your chair.	Sit in your chair for 30 minutes.		
1 Day After Surgery	Stay out of bed for 1 hour.	Stay out of bed for 1 hour.	Stay out of bed for 1 hour.	
2 Days After Surgery	Walk 1 lap around the unit.	Walk 1 lap around the unit.	Walk 1 lap around the unit.	
3 Days After Surgery	Walk 2 laps around the unit.	Walk 2 laps around the unit.	Walk 2 laps around the unit.	
4 Days After Surgery	Walk more than 2 laps around the unit.	Walk more than 2 laps around the unit.	Walk more than 2 laps around the unit.	Walk more than 2 laps around the unit.
5 Days After Surgery	Walk more than 2 laps around the unit.	Walk more than 2 laps around the unit.	Walk more than 2 laps around the unit.	Walk more than 2 laps around the unit.

Exercise Your Lungs!

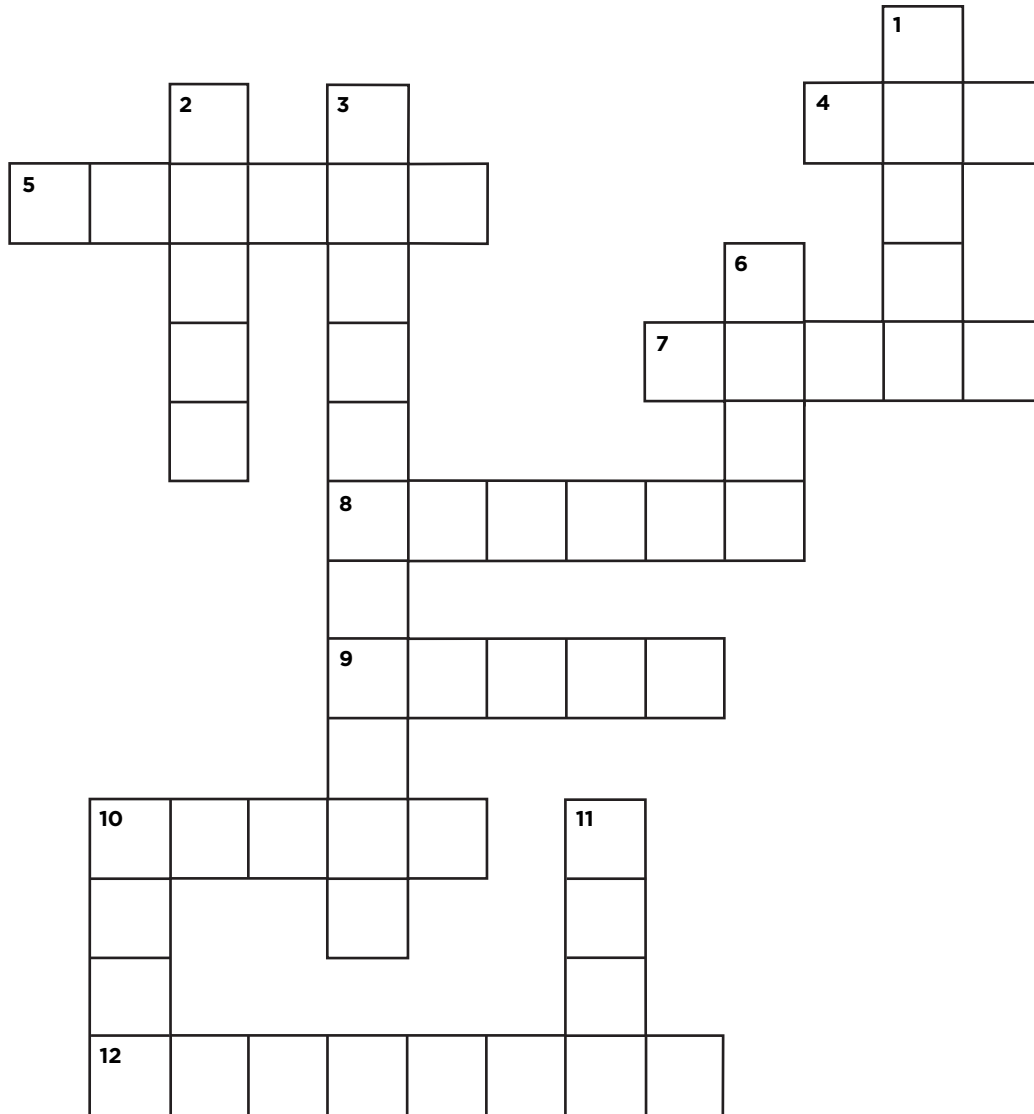
Try to exercise your lungs 10 times every hour you're awake. This could be using your incentive spirometer, blowing bubbles, or blowing on your pinwheel.

Put a sticker or X in the box every time you exercise your lungs 10 times.

	Day of Surgery	1 Day After Surgery	2 Days After Surgery	3 Days After Surgery	4 Days After Surgery	5 Days After Surgery
6:00 AM						
7:00 AM						
8:00 AM						
9:00 AM						
10:00 AM						
11:00 AM						
12:00 AM						
1:00 AM						
2:00 PM						
3:00 PM						
4:00 PM						
5:00 PM						
6:00 PM						
7:00 PM						
8:00 PM						
9:00 PM						
10:00 PM						

Crossword Puzzle

Use the clues to fill in the crossword puzzle.



Across

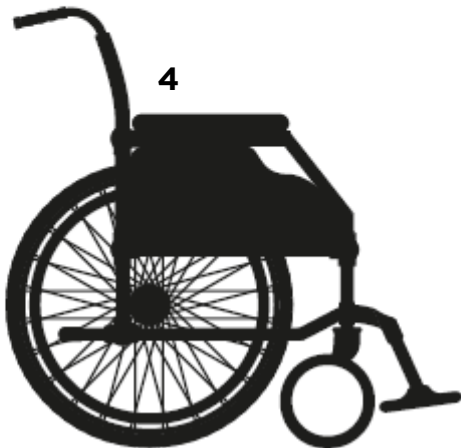
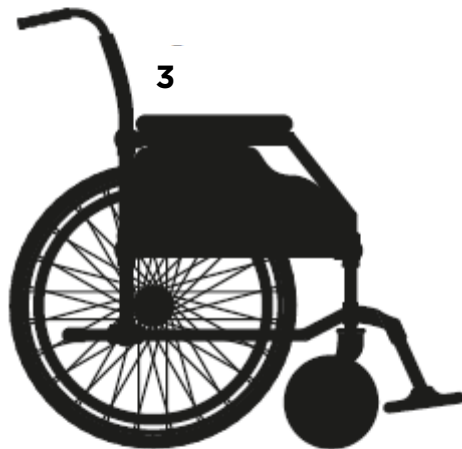
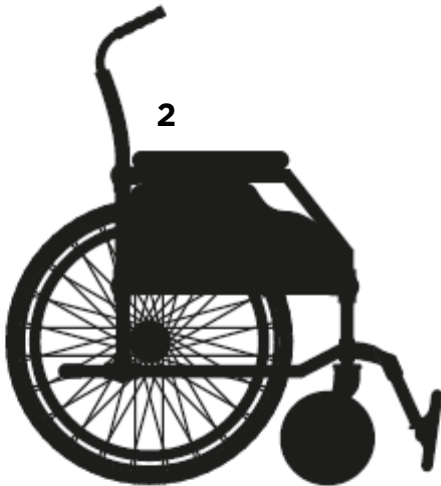
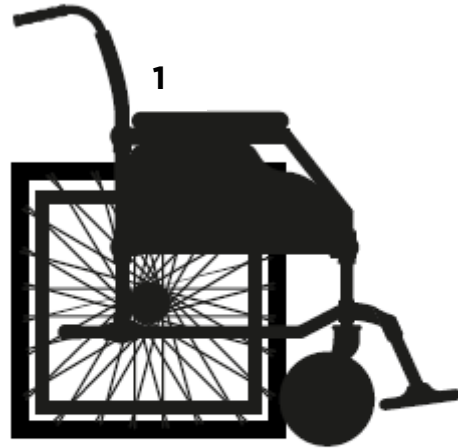
4. Covered by the sleeves of your shirt.
5. Person who prescribes medicine.
7. Where your fork goes.
8. “Thumb” of your foot.
9. I ate too much. Now I have a _____ ache.
10. It’ll take a bit of _____ -grease to get the rust off.
12. Where to pull off the road when you have a flat tire.

Down

1. Where you wear a bracelet or watch.
2. The comedian had us in _____ with his routine.
3. Where all the lint collects.
6. It smells.
10. Tell me again, I’m all _____.
11. I fell off my bike and scraped my _____.

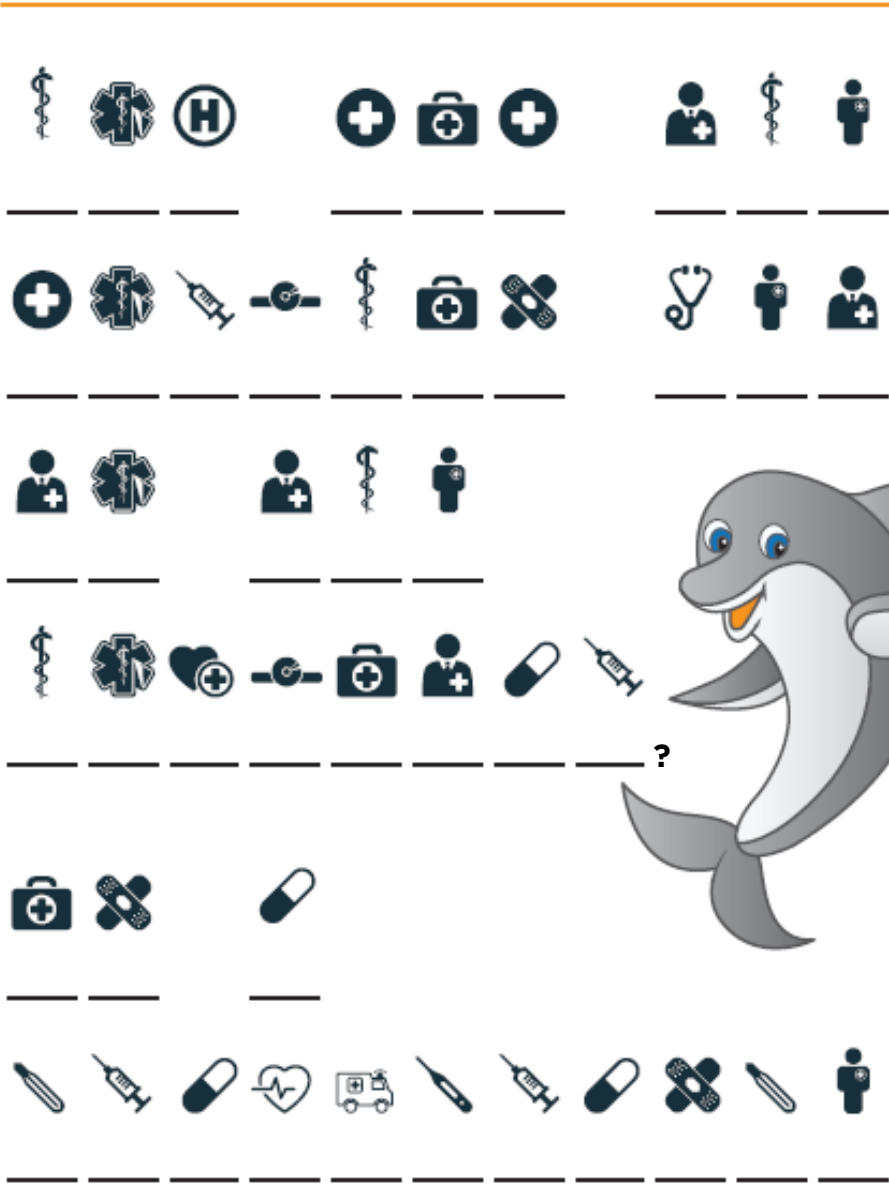
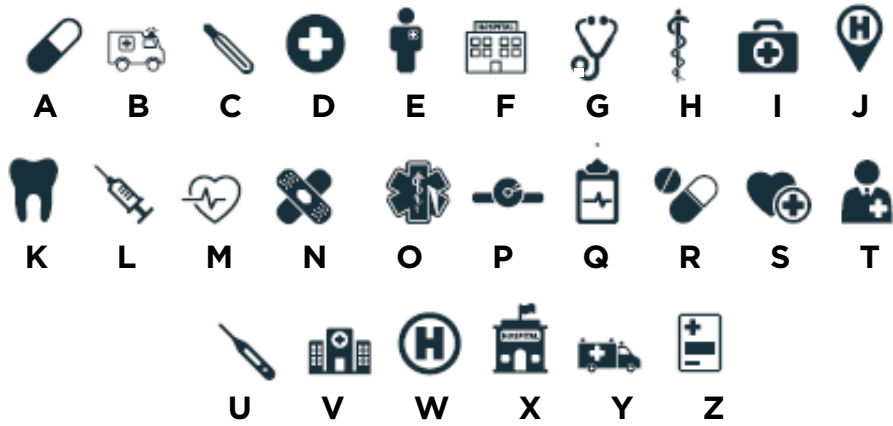
Shadow Matching

Find the shadow that matches the original.



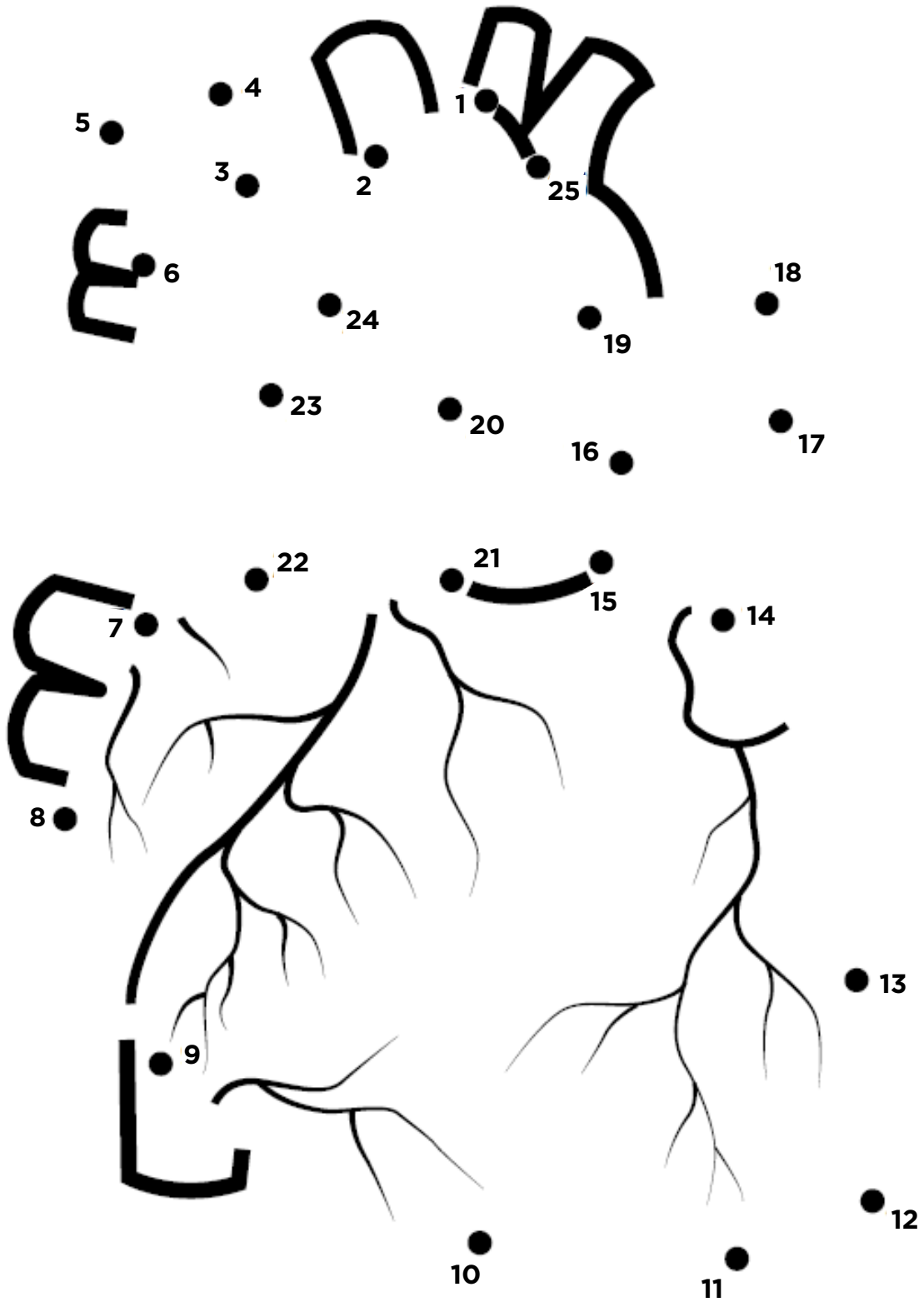
Code Break

Break the code!



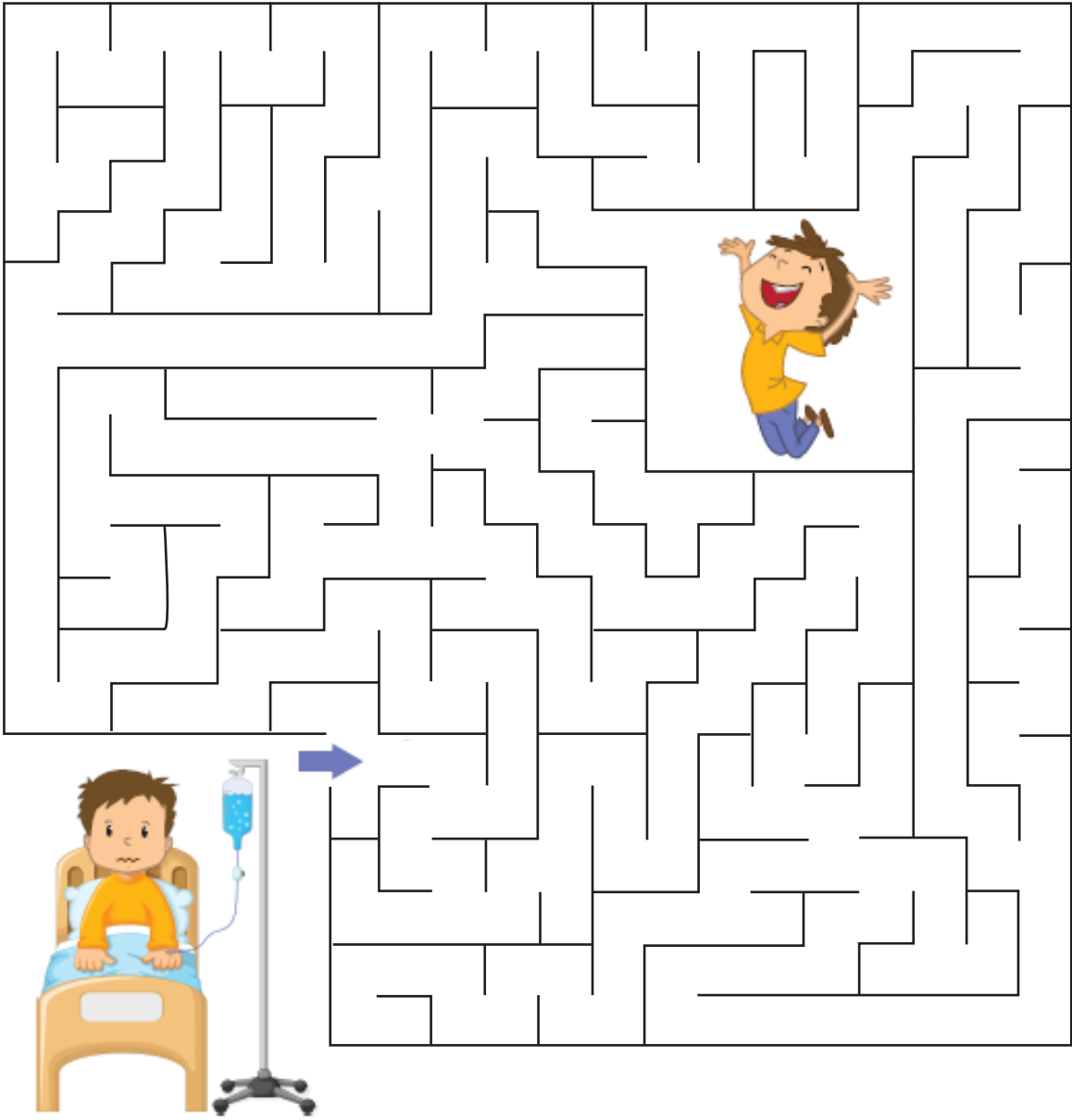
Connect the Dots

Connect the dots to make a picture.









Maze

Find your way through the maze.



Follow the Path

Follow the path to match the picture with its name.

						Ears
						Mouth
						Eyes
						Fingers
						Toes
						Nose

Word Search

Find the words.



Bed
Bubbles
Callbutton
Chest
Doctor
Epidural

Gloves
Heart
Hospital
Ice Cream
Lungs
Mask

Medicine
Nebulizer
Nurse
PCA
Selfcare
Spine

Spirometer
Stomach
Surgery
Therapist
Throat
Xray



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