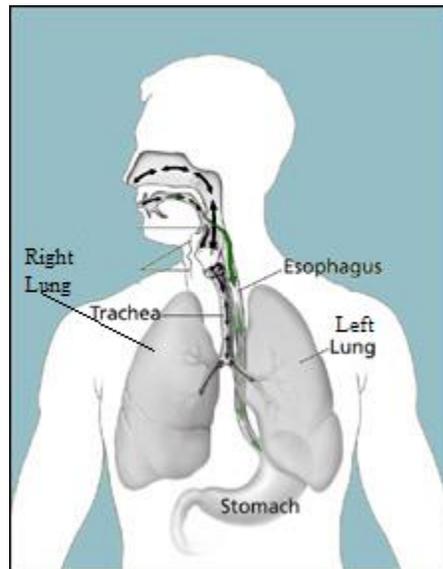




Hackensack
Meridian *Health*
Hackensack University
Medical Center

About Your Thoracic Surgery

Thoracic refers to your chest, which includes your heart, lungs, airways, ribs, esophagus, and thymus gland. In order for you to recover as quickly and painlessly as possible, it is important to understand how to prepare for your surgery and what to expect afterwards.



Your Inpatient Thoracic Surgery Team

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Before your Surgery

Preparing for surgery

Exercise!

Exercise and aerobic activities will make your recovery easier. Brisk walking is a good example of this type of exercise. Try to start at least two weeks before your scheduled surgery. Walk as quickly as you can daily for 40 minutes, preferably at a pace where you feel winded with conversation.

Breathing exercises

You will receive an incentive spirometer to help expand your lungs and prevent pneumonia after surgery. You will be instructed how to use the incentive spirometer properly. Practice 5 times per day at home prior to surgery. Bring your incentive spirometer with you the day of your surgery.

You will NEED to use it after your operation!

About smoking – DON'T!

Any form of smoking places you at a much higher risk for pneumonia and other serious complications after surgery. Quitting smoking prior to surgery is one of the most important things you can do to decrease post-operative complications and speed up your recovery. If you are having trouble quitting or would like more information about smoking cessation programs please contact Theresa Catalano at 551-996-2211 or go to www.njquitline.org.

Medications

Your medications may need to be changed, stopped or adjusted before your surgery. Please provide an accurate list of your medications. Your list of medications should include:

- Any prescriptions medicines
- Over the counter (OTC) medications (such as aspirins, Advil, Aleve and Tylenol)
- Herbs, vitamins and supplements

The day before surgery

The day before surgery a nurse from the admissions office will call you after 4PM. They will inform you of arrival time and place as well as what medications you may take the morning of surgery. If you do not receive a call by 6PM please call 551-996-2405.

- You should not eat or drink after midnight the night before your surgery. This rule includes gum & candy.
- Please shower.

- DO NOT SMOKE.

Day of Your Surgery:

- Please arrive on time, park in the main garage at the front of the hospital.
- Bring your insurance card, a photo ID, and your advanced directive if you have one.
- Please leave valuables such as jewelry at home.
- Take the medications you were instructed to take with a small sip of water upon waking.
- Please bring your Incentive Spirometer (if given).

Immediately after surgery:

The surgical team will monitor you closely. You may be hooked up to numerous wires, tubes, drains, and monitors. Most of these will be removed within 24 hours. You may feel tired, nauseous, or have incisional pain and/or numbness. Many times during surgery your incisions will have been injected with a long-acting local pain medication to help you feel more comfortable during the first few days after surgery.

Pain Management:

It is important to control your pain so you are able to cough, deep breathe, use your incentive spirometer, and ambulate in order to avoid post-operative complications. If your pain is not controlled it is important that you tell a member of your health care team.

SIDE EFFECTS OF NARCOTIC PAIN MEDICATIONS:

Although infrequent, there is a small risk of developing psychological and/or physical dependence to narcotic pain medications. The risk of these unwanted effects are avoided if the medications are taken exactly as prescribed. It is important that alcohol, benzodiazepines, and other controlled substances are not used while taking prescribed narcotic pain meds. In addition to narcotic pain medications, you will be instructed to take anti-inflammatory pain medications if appropriate. Additional non-medicine pain measures are always appropriate, such as meditation, music and/or pet therapy, and warm or cold compresses.

ACTIVITY:

In most cases, you are expected to get out of bed to a chair the day of your surgery and ambulate in the room. Most drains, tubes, and IV lines will be removed as soon as possible after surgery, often by the day after surgery. It is important that you participate independently in breathing exercises and activity. Ask for help if needed and as often as needed.

Length of Hospital Stay:

The typical length of stay can vary on your surgery and response to the surgery. You may be discharged as soon as the same day or the day after surgery. What is important to realize is that you will recover from surgery, heal quickly, be more comfortable, and be safe from the risk of hospital infections the sooner you are at home.

Day of Discharge:

You will be seen by a member of our team the day of discharge in order to answer any questions you may have and go over your discharge instructions. Prescriptions for pain medications and stool softeners will be given – use them as instructed. Anesthesia, surgery, and pain medications cause constipation. Stay hydrated and use the stool softeners.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR HOME

- If you had a chest tube, the dressing may be taken off 24 hours after the tube was removed. A stitch may be in place which will be removed at your post-op office visit.
- Shower daily. Use soap and water to wash all of your incisions; no ointments. No bathing or swimming. You may leave your surgical wounds uncovered.
- Resume most usual activities after surgery. You will be tired, this is to be expected. Increase your diet - small frequent meals, drink water. Continue to walk as much as possible. No lifting more than 5 lbs.
- Continue to use your incentive spirometry for up to 2 weeks after your post-operative appointment with our office.
- **DO NOT DRIVE UNTIL CLEARED BY SURGEON.** No driving while taking narcotic pain meds.
- Please call our office with any questions or concerns, specifically if you have unexpected chest pain, difficulty breathing, leg swelling, unresolved pain, fevers, or signs of wound infection.
- Please call the office to make a post op appointment 7-10 days after hospital discharge.

