

Care After Radial Artery Removal for Coronary Bypass Surgery

General Information

The arm where the radial artery was removed should not be used for taking blood pressures or blood samples for one month after surgery. That arm will no longer have a radial pulse (pulse in the wrist) because your radial artery was removed. It is important that you follow these instructions after your surgery.

Exercises

Start these hand exercises one day after surgery. They will help reduce swelling in your arm and hand. Repeat each exercise ten (10) times, at least twice a day for four weeks. Use the hand that was operated on.

1. Make an "O" by touching the thumb to each fingertip, one at a time.
2. Open and close your fist.
3. Lay your wrist and fingers flat on a table, place the thumb under the first finger and flick the thumb outward.

Feelings of numbness, tingling, pricking, burning, or pain in your hand are not unusual. Swelling can press on nerves.

Incision Care

Keep your incision (cut) clean and dry. You may wash the incision with soap and water while taking a shower and then gently pat dry. Do not use creams, lotions, or ointments on the incision.

Problems

If you have any questions or if:

- You have chills or an unexplained or unexpected temperature of 100 degrees or more
- Your incision is tender
- The area that was operated on gets swollen or looks red
- The incision opens or starts to drain

Call Telephone Care Communication System (TCCS) at (612) 725-2242, Monday through Friday, between 7:30 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. At any other time call toll free 1-866-687-7382 or 1-866-NURSEVA.

(over)

Content approval: Cardiothoracic Surgery

March 2000

Reviewed March 2003

Revised October 2005

VA Medical Center

Minneapolis, Minnesota