

Heart surgery stoplight tool

Which zone are you in today: **green**, **yellow** or **red**?

Doctor/Provider: _____

Phone: _____



Green Zone

I'm feeling good.

- My chest incision site and my other incisions are closed, clean, and slightly pink with only a little swelling or tenderness.
- My breathing, heart rate, and blood pressure are normal for me.
- My appetite and bowel movements are normal for me.
- I am able to perform my daily activities with little help.
- I am able to maintain an acceptable pain level.
- I am doing OK with my feelings and stress.

How I'll prevent symptoms today

I will:

- Keep my incision clean and care for it the way my doctor/provider has recommended.
- Do only the activities my doctor/provider says are safe.
- Attend cardiac rehabilitation (rehab).
- Take my daily medicine as directed.
- Keep my doctor/provider appointments.
- Weigh myself every morning, when I first get out of bed and after I go to the bathroom.
- Check my blood pressure regularly.
- Do my cough and deep breathing exercises or use hand-held breathing device.



Yellow Zone

I'm not feeling good.

- I hear or feel popping, clicking, or movement in my chest bone (sternum).
- My incision has liquid draining from it, looks red, feels warm, or has a bad smell.
- I gained more than 2 to 3 pounds in one day or 5 pounds or more in one week.
- It is harder for me to breathe with activities.
- It feels like my heart is racing or is beating irregularly.
- I have had three or more blood pressure readings that are higher or lower than my normal.
- I have new or worse swelling in my feet, ankles, legs, or belly.
- I have not had a regular bowel movement (BM) in 3 days.
- I have a fever over 101°F, feel very cold, or have body aches.

Caution!

Take action TODAY. I will:

- Report these symptoms to my doctor/provider without delay
AND continue to take my medications as directed
AND call my doctor/provider again if my symptoms do not improve.

- _____
- _____



Red Zone

I feel awful!

- I have chest pain that is different from my incision pain and it is getting worse.
- I have trouble breathing or I am breathing fast, even when I am resting.
- I feel dizzy or like I might faint, and it doesn't get better when I sit or lie down.
- Blood is coming from my wound and I can't stop it.

Get help!

Take action NOW:

- **CALL 911 or seek medical care RIGHT AWAY.**
- While getting help, do this:

- _____
- _____

