Chest wall mobility following heart surgery: weeks 4 to 12

Goal
To restore posture after surgery

Warning
• Do not attempt these stretches until 4 weeks after surgery
• If stretching causes pain stop and consult a member of the rehabilitation team

Instructions
• Do the exercises twice daily
• Repeat each exercise 2 to 5 times
• Hold each stretch for 10 to 15 seconds
• Continue to do these exercises until 12 weeks following surgery

1. Posture
Lying on back with chair
• Place a rolled towel between the shoulder blades
• Put feet up on a chair or bend knees with feet on the floor
• Tuck chin in and stretch hands above head and hold for one minute
Chest wall mobility following heart surgery: weeks 4 to 12 continued...

2. Stretching upper back (thoracic spine)

Sitting
- Bring bottom forward on chair and cross one ankle onto the opposite knee (to protect low back)
- Place hands behind neck
- Stretch back over the chair to feel stretch between shoulder blades

Lying on back
- Place a rolled towel between the shoulder blades and place hands behind the neck
- Cross ankle onto opposite knee (to protect low back)
- Stretch back over towel to feel stretch between shoulder blades

3. Stretching of rib cage

Lying on back
- Bend knees and a small weight in one or both hands (approx. 500 gms rice). Raise the weight above your head to feel a stretch in the front of the chest

Lying on side
- Raise a small weight above your head to feel a stretch at the side of the trunk / rib cage

This is a general guide only. Exercises may vary according to individual needs.