

Name of Child: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## Going Home After a NUSS Procedure

Your child just had pectus excavatum surgery, also called a **NUSS procedure**. This procedure is done to fix pectus excavatum, or sunken chest. This procedure helps reshape your child's chest wall. During this surgery, the surgeon makes one incision on each side of the chest and puts in a metal bar. The bar is then rotated, which lifts the chest.

Here are some things that are important for children after they have a NUSS procedure. Your child's nurse and surgeon will talk to you about these in more detail. If you have any questions, ask your child's nurse or surgeon.

- Pain medication is usually required on a regular basis. It is important not to take more than the prescribed dose of medication. It is also important not to take pain medicine more frequently than instructed.
  - If your child's pain is not under control, make sure you have not stopped (**weaned**) the pain medicine too quickly. If your child is not due for another dose of narcotic pain medicine, give a dose of acetaminophen (Tylenol®) or ibuprofen (Motrin®). If this does not help your child's pain after an hour, call the surgeon's office.
  - If there is an area of pain when the skin in front of the bar is lightly touched, let your child's surgeon know at the next follow-up appointment so that medicine for nerve pain can be started.
  - When weaning your child's pain medicine, wean the mid-day dose first. Wean the night time dose last.
  - Each child's recovery period is different. The average time it takes to wean off narcotics is 2 to 3 weeks. It may take up to 6 weeks for your child to completely wean off narcotics and over-the-counter pain medicine.
- Bring extra pillows for the car ride home. If you are traveling far, be prepared to take frequent breaks to have your child move around or stretch on your way home.

- Consider the layout of your child's bedroom, including the height and location of the bed. It is okay if your child wants to sleep on his or her side if it is comfortable.
- Some children may feel more comfortable sleeping in a recliner chair the first few days after surgery.
- You will be given a card that says your child has had a NUSS procedure and has metal in the body. Make sure to keep this card with your child at all times.
- If your child needs Magnetic Resonance Imaging (**MRI**), it is safe for your child. Make sure to tell the radiologist your child has had a NUSS procedure.
- The NUSS bars may set off airport metal detectors. Make sure to tell airport security your child has a medical device.
- Your child may not drive until fully recovered and off of narcotics for at least 48 hours.

### **Activity:**

- Your child should be up and walking as he or she is able. It is common to hear an occasional popping sound as the ribs slide along the bar.
  - If there is a loud popping sound and it is very painful, call your child's surgeon right away. Your child may need to have an x-ray.
- Increase activity slowly. Take your child for a walk every day and walk a little longer distance or a little faster every day.
- During the first few weeks, your child may tire easily and need frequent naps.
- No contact sports for 3 months. Your child can run, throw a ball, and do other physical activities once the surgeon says it is okay. This is usually around 6 weeks after surgery.
- No swimming for 4 weeks after surgery. Your child needs to be off of narcotics for at least 48 hours before swimming.
- No lifting greater than 10 pounds for 3 months.

## Going back to school if surgery is done during the school year:

- You should meet with the school nurse and counselor before your child is ready to go back to school.
- Your child cannot go back to school if still taking narcotic pain medicine. Your child must be off of narcotics for 48 hours before going back to school.
- Backpacks can be heavy. Your child should not lift any objects over 10 pounds for 3 months. Some schools have a buddy system where a friend may be assigned to help carry your child's backpack as needed.
- Ask your child's school for an early pass to allow for extra time for travel between classes.
- Your child cannot participate in gym or physical education (P.E.) classes for 3 months after the procedure. Your child's surgeon can provide a note to the school if needed.

## Incision care:

- Make sure your child and any caregivers practice good handwashing.
  - ❑ For more information, ask your child's nurse or surgeon for the handout, **Good Handwashing #100** (Check when done.)
- For the first 4 weeks after the surgery, do not use any lotions, oils, or powders on the incisions.
- Your child can soak in a bathtub once the incisions are completely healed.
- For the first week, check the incision for signs of infection every day:
  - redness
  - swelling
  - fluid from the incisionIf you see any of these, call the surgery office.
- Do not squeeze or open the incisions. If there is any problem with the incision, call the surgeon's office, no matter how long it has been since the surgery.

## **Constipation:**

- Medicines such as narcotics can cause constipation. Your child may need an over-the-counter stool softener (such as Miralax® or Colace®) or a laxative (such as Milk of Magnesia®).
- Offer your child fluids to drink every 1 or 2 hours while awake to stay hydrated.
- Encourage your child to walk often. This can help with constipation by being active.
- If your child does not poop every 1 to 2 days, call the surgeon's office.

## **Diet:**

- Eating many types of foods will give your child the nutrients to heal. Offer your child food he or she likes from all the food groups.
- For 2 or 3 weeks after surgery, some children eat less than usual. Offer your child small amounts of food several times a day until your child's appetite is back to normal.
- Make sure to give your child food each time your child takes narcotic pain medicine. This can help avoid side effects of the narcotic, such as nausea and upset stomach.

## **Follow-up care:**

- Call the surgeon's office today for a follow-up appointment for 2 to 3 weeks after your child's surgery. The surgeon needs to see how your child is doing after the surgery. The surgery office phone number is: 602-933-0016.
- Before you leave the hospital, fill your child's prescriptions. Make sure you have enough of your child's medicines to last until your child sees the surgeon again. If not, tell your nurse or surgeon you need prescriptions. Refills for narcotics usually cannot be called into the pharmacy and may require a paper prescription signed by your child's surgeon.

## When to call the surgeon:

- If your child is having trouble breathing or you are concerned with your child's health, take your child to the nearest emergency room.
- Call the surgeon's office if your child's pain is not under control or the pain gets worse.
- Call the surgeon's office if your child has any of these in the first few weeks after surgery:
  - fast heart beat
  - throws up often
  - loose stools often
  - is not pooping every 1 to 2 days
  - does not want to eat (loss of appetite)
  - incision is red, swollen, or leaks fluid
  - incision is more painful
  - is hard to wake up
  - temperature over 101° F

- Do you have a thermometer? Show your nurse or doctor how you take your child's temperature. (Check when done.)

## Now that you've read this:

- Tell your nurse or surgeon how you will care for your child at home after the NUSS procedure. (Check when done.)
- Tell your nurse or surgeon when you need to call the surgeon's office. (Check when done.)



If you have any questions or concerns,  
 call your child's surgeon or  call \_\_\_\_\_

If you want to know more about child health and illness,  
visit our library at The Emily Center at Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016  
602-933-1400  
866-933-6459  
[www.phoenixchildrens.org](http://www.phoenixchildrens.org)  
[www.theemilycenter.org](http://www.theemilycenter.org)  
Facebook: [facebook.com/theemilycenter](https://facebook.com/theemilycenter)  
Twitter: @emilycenter  
Pinterest: [pinterest.com/emilycenter](https://pinterest.com/emilycenter)

**Disclaimer**

The information provided at this site is intended to be general information, and is provided for educational purposes only. It is not intended to take the place of examination, treatment, or consultation with a physician. Phoenix Children's Hospital urges you to contact your physician with any questions you may have about a medical condition.

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• #1674 • Written by Nicki Mitchell, MSN, CPN

# Home Care After a NUSS Procedure

Name of Health Care Provider: \_\_\_\_\_

Date returned: \_\_\_\_\_  db

## Family Review of Handout

Health care providers: Please teach families with this handout.

Families: Please let us know what you think of this handout.

Would you say this handout is hard to read?  Yes  No

easy to read?  Yes  No

Please circle the parts of the handout that were hard to understand.

Would you say this handout is interesting to read?  Yes  No

Why or why not?

Would you do anything differently after reading  
this handout?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

After reading this handout, do you have any  
questions about the subject?  Yes  No

If yes, what?

Is there anything you don't like about the drawings?

Yes

No

If yes, what?

What changes would you make in this handout to make it better or easier to understand?

Please return your review of this handout to your nurse or doctor or send it to the address below.

The Emily Center  
Health Education Specialist  
Phoenix Children's Hospital  
1919 East Thomas Road  
Phoenix, AZ 85016-7710

602-933-1395

**Thank you for helping us!**