

PATIENT RECOVERY GUIDE

Minimally Invasive Lung Surgery (VATS / Robotic-Assisted Resection)

A guide to your recovery after lung resection surgery at William Osler Health System

Prepared by Dr. Kashif Irshad MD MSc FRCSC

Chief, Division of Thoracic Surgery

William Osler Health System, Brampton Civic Hospital

What was done

You have had a **minimally invasive lung resection** — either Video-Assisted Thoracoscopic Surgery (VATS) or Robotic-Assisted Thoracoscopic Surgery (RATS). Using small incisions, Dr. Irshad removed a portion of lung tissue (wedge, segment, or lobe). A small drain was placed in your chest during surgery to remove fluid and air; this is typically removed before discharge. Most patients stay in hospital for 2–4 days.

BREATHING EXERCISES — DO THESE EVERY HOUR WHILE AWAKE

Deep breathing: Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose, hold for 2–3 seconds, exhale slowly through your mouth. Repeat 10 times.

Incentive spirometer: Use the device provided by the hospital every hour while awake. Breathe in slowly to raise the ball/piston as high as possible, hold 3 seconds, release slowly.

Coughing: Hold a pillow firmly against your chest, take a deep breath, and cough firmly. This clears secretions and prevents pneumonia. Do this 4–6 times per day.

These exercises are the single most important thing you can do for your recovery.

RECOVERY TIMELINE

Week-by-week recovery guide

Hospital (Days 1–4)

- Chest drain removed once drainage is minimal and lung is re-expanded
- Pain is managed with a combination of oral and IV medications
- Breathing exercises with incentive spirometer every hour while awake
- Short walks in the corridor encouraged from Day 1

Week 1–2

- Rest at home; fatigue is significant — this is normal
- Continue breathing exercises hourly while awake
- Gentle walking around the house; gradually increase distance each day
- No lifting more than 2–3 kg; no driving for 2 weeks
- Incision care: keep dry for 5 days; steri-strips fall off on their own

Week 3–4

- Most patients return to light desk work
- Increasing energy levels; walk further each day
- No strenuous activity, gym, or heavy lifting
- Follow-up with Dr. Irshad to review pathology results and plan next steps

Week 6–8

- Full return to most normal activities and exercise
- If cancer was found: oncology referral is typically arranged at the Week 4 visit
- Pulmonary function gradually improves over 3–6 months

ACTIVITY RESTRICTIONS

- No lifting > 5 kg for 6 weeks
- No driving for 2 weeks (or while on narcotic pain medication)
- No air travel for 6 weeks without medical clearance
- Swimming: avoid until incisions fully healed (6 weeks)
- Return to work: varies by job type — discuss with Dr. Irshad

WOUND CARE

- Keep incisions dry for the first 5 days
- Steri-strips or glue will fall off on their own — do not peel
- Pat dry after showering; no soaking in baths or pools
- A small amount of bruising around the incision is normal
- Numbness or tingling around the incision area may persist for months

GO TO EMERGENCY OR CALL 911 IF YOU EXPERIENCE:

- Increasing shortness of breath or oxygen requirement
- Fever above 38.5°C (101.3°F)
- Coughing up blood or large amounts of coloured phlegm
- Sudden sharp chest pain
- Redness, warmth, swelling, or discharge from incision sites
- Calf pain, leg swelling, or sudden worsening of breathlessness (possible blood clot)

CALL OUR CLINIC AT (905) 458-4520 IF YOU HAVE:

- For non-urgent concerns, call the clinic: (905) 458-4520

QUESTIONS? CONTACT OUR CLINIC

Dr. Kashif Irshad — Division of Thoracic Surgery
William Osler Health System, Brampton Civic Hospital
Tel: (905) 458-4520 • thoracic@williamoslerhs.ca
www.drirshad.ca