

# Coronary Artery Bypass Graft Surgery (CABG) Discharge Information

## What is coronary artery bypass graft surgery?

Coronary artery bypass graft surgery (CABG) is surgery to improve blood flow when one or more of the arteries that supplies blood to the heart muscle (called coronary arteries) are narrowed or blocked. A blood vessel from another part of your body, called a graft, will be used to make a detour for blood to flow through. One end of the graft will be stitched above the blockage in the heart artery. The other end will be stitched below the blockage. This will allow blood to bypass the blockage and get to where it is needed, to provide oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle.

The most common graft is done using an internal mammary artery, a blood vessel found in the chest wall. This artery is close to the bypass site and has a good blood supply, so it only needs to be sewn to the blocked coronary artery below the blockage. Other graft vessels include the radial artery in the arm or the saphenous vein in the leg.

## How can I take care of myself when I go home?

How long it takes to get better depends on how well you recover, your overall health, and any complications you may have.

### Management

- Your provider will give you a list of your medicines when you leave the hospital.
  - Know your medicines. Know what they look like, how much you should take each time, how often you should take them, and why you take each one.
  - Take your medicines exactly as your provider tells you to.
  - Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse. Include any nonprescription medicines and supplements on the list.
- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
  - Treat pain
  - Treat or prevent an infection
  - Prevent side effects, such as nausea or constipation, from other treatments
  - Relax and widen blood vessels and allow blood to flow through them easier
  - Help prevent blood clots
  - Slow the heart rate and reduce the workload of the heart
  - Control cholesterol levels
  - Reduce fluid build-up and swelling in the body
- You may need to continue a cardiac rehabilitation program after you leave the hospital to help you learn ways to live healthier after heart surgery.

- To care for your incision:
  - Keep your incision clean.
  - If you are told to change your dressing on your incision, wash your hands before changing the dressing and after disposing of the dressing.

### **Appointments**

- Follow your provider's instructions for follow-up appointments and routine tests.
- Keep appointments for all routine testing you may need.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.

### **Diet, Exercise, and Other Lifestyle Changes**

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.
- Get plenty of rest while you're recovering. Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids.
- Exercise as your provider recommends.
- Don't smoke. Smoking can worsen poor blood circulation.
- You will probably need to make changes in some of the foods you eat. Ask your provider about the benefits of talking to a dietician to learn what you need in a healthy diet. You will need to eat a diet low in sodium, low in cholesterol and high in fiber.
- Ask your healthcare provider if there are any foods or medicines you should avoid.
- Lose weight if you need to and keep a healthy weight.
- Find ways to make your life less stressful.
- Follow activity restrictions, such as not driving or operating machinery, as recommended by your healthcare provider or pharmacist, especially if you are taking pain medicines or muscle relaxants.

### **Call emergency medical services or 911 if you have new or worsening:**

- Chest discomfort (pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain) that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back or chest discomfort that goes to your arms, neck, jaw or back
- Fast, slow, or irregular heartbeat
- Feeling like you are going to die
- Severe shortness of breath

Do not drive yourself if you have any of these symptoms.

### **Call your healthcare provider if you have new or worsening:**

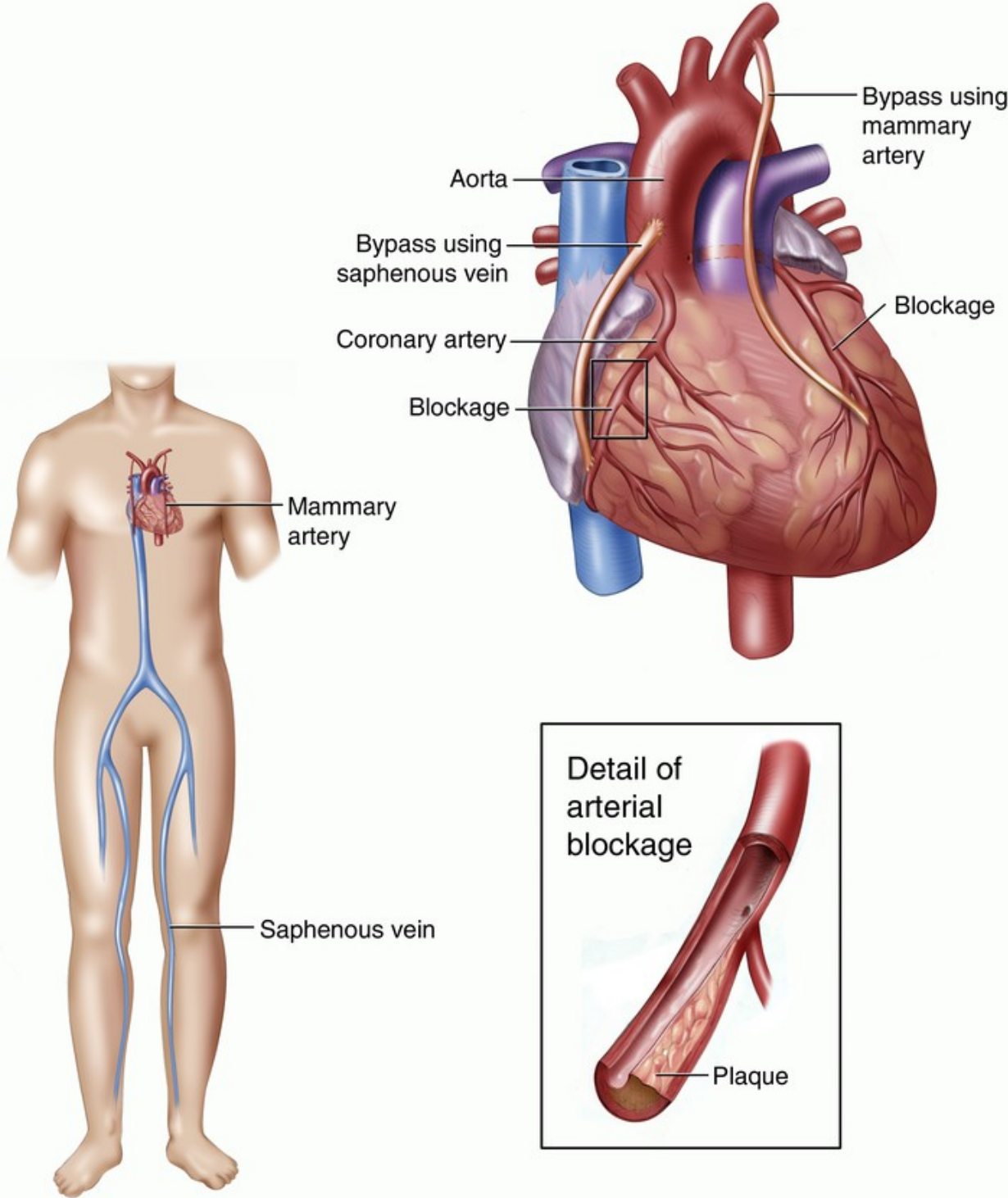
- Chest pain that gets worse or happens more often
- Depression
- Signs of infection around your surgical wound. These include:
  - The area around your wound is more red or painful

- Your wound area is very warm to touch
- You have blood, pus, or other fluid coming from the wound area
- You have a fever higher than 101.5° F (38.6° C)
- You have chills or muscle aches
- Swelling in your legs, ankles, or feet
- Unusual bruising or bleeding

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*This content is reviewed periodically and is subject to change as new health information becomes available. The information is intended to inform and educate and is not a replacement for medical evaluation, advice, diagnosis or treatment by a healthcare professional.*

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