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Practical advice from a patient who has been through recovery of a pacemaker and ICD implantation

In no particular order:

- Before surgery, move some of your dishes and glasses at home to shelves where you won't have to stretch to reach. You can use your right arm, but it is less painful to not stretch at all the first few days.
- If you are a woman, consider packing a strapless bra for the hospital. When I got home from the hospital the first time, I put one on and it was so much less painful without the weight of my breasts tugging on the incision. And I am not large or saggy at all. I even slept in mine and it was much more comfortable. For my second surgery, I took one to the hospital and put it on as soon as I was in my room after the procedure.
- Get some of the squooshy pillows...the kind filled with teeny beads that are covered in stretchy nylon. Lots of kids have them and they sell them in fun shapes and colors. They are very lightweight and perfect for molding however you need it. I used one tucked under my slinged arm at night so my elbow was not tugging down the incision site toward the mattress. In fact, I still use one at night when I sleep on my left side as it is just more comfortable.
- If you are not used to sleeping on your back, consider putting a pillow under your knees. I did not feel comfortable sleeping on either side for a while and my back killed me the first night but once I put a pillow under my knees, the pain disappeared.
- Consider having your partner sleep in a different bed for the first two nights. My husband is a flailing sleeper and I was terrified he would whack my incision...he slept in the guest bedroom for a few nights.
- Get a good haircut that does not require you to raise your arm above your head to style. You will still want to look good while recovering. Using the sprayer in my kitchen sink to wash my hair before I was able to shower made me feel so much better.
- Identify clothes from your wardrobe that are easy to put on. My casual summer skirts with elastic waistbands and some shirts that snap on the front were perfect when I had my surgery in the summer. Sweats and a zip-up hoodie were great in the winter. And slip on shoes. Make sure whatever you take to come home from the hospital in fits the criteria. And invest in a front-closure bra for when you eventually put a strapped bra on, it's easier than reaching around back.
- Get out and walk as soon as you feel you can...I even walked around the hospital and it felt good just to move around, even if slowly at first.
- A friend brought by a tray of cut up fruit and veggies after my surgery. It was the perfect food to have around. No prep necessary, no cutting, no anything, just grab and eat...and it

was healthy. You might consider fixing up a tray the night before you leave so you will have it when you get home. I recovered at home by myself and formerly easy things, like opening a jar of salsa, were nearly impossible when favoring your left arm.

- My bed is kind of high and I am kind of short. Without the use of both arms to get myself in and situated, I realized it was not that easy. My husband brought me the stepstool from his closet and put it by the bed...perfect for using as leverage to shift my behind farther into the bed once I got in, then I swing my legs up.
- Talk to other people who have been through it...you aren't alone!