



How Can I Prepare for Heart Surgery?

Doctors do successful heart surgery every day. But it's normal to be concerned if you're having operation. Knowing what to expect should help ease your worries.



What should I do before my surgery?

- You'll probably be admitted to the hospital the afternoon before your operation. The staff will do some tests, give you instructions and prepare you for surgery.
- Your healthcare team (surgeons, cardiologists, anesthesiologists, nurses and therapists) will visit you to discuss your operation. This is a good time to ask questions and voice any concerns you may have.
- You may need some routine tests or procedures, such as an electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG) and chest X-ray.
- Hair will be shaved off the site where the operation will be done. That makes it easier to clean the skin and prevents pain when adhesive bandages are removed. Your skin will be washed with antiseptic soap to reduce risk of infection.
- Technicians will draw blood for lab tests and to cross-match for donor blood. Modern operating

methods, however, reduce blood loss and a transfusion is done as seldom as possible.

- You won't be able to eat or drink anything after midnight before your surgery.
- Your doctor may tell you that you cannot take certain medicines, such as aspirin, that affect blood clotting.

What will happen on the day of my operation?

- Give your glasses, dentures, watch, jewelry, contact lenses, clothing and other personal items to family members.
- About an hour before your operation, you'll get medicines to help you rest comfortably.
- Attendants will wheel you to the operating room on a rolling bed. You'll probably be awake enough to move between the hospital room bed and your rolling bed, but you may not remember doing it.

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- Heart operations are usually planned in advance and start on time, but sometimes an emergency may delay them.

What happens in the operation room?

- You will be given anesthesia to cause deep sleep, freedom from pain and to leave you with no memory of the operation.
- Heart operations usually take 3–5 hours. The length usually depends on how complex the operation is.
- Your family and friends should stay in the waiting room so the surgeon can find them to keep them informed.
- After the operation, you will be moved to the intensive care unit (ICU) or a recovery room for your recovery to begin.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

What should I bring to the hospital?

Will this affect my medication regimen?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.



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