

# Heart Surgery

## Heart Surgery

Your heart pumps oxygen-rich blood throughout your body. When the arteries, which carry blood to the heart muscle, become blocked with plaque (fatty deposits), your doctor may want you to have heart surgery.

You will be taken to the operating room where you will get anesthesia to put you to sleep. During heart surgery you will be connected to a heart-lung machine. The *lung* portion of the machine supplies oxygen to your blood. The *heart* portion of the machine pumps blood throughout your body.

The two most common types of heart surgery are coronary artery bypass and heart valve repair or replacement.

- **Coronary artery bypass:** Bypass surgery is done when plaque blocks the coronary artery. During bypass surgery your surgeon will take a vein from your leg or an artery from your chest wall to bypass (go around) the blockage.

By bypassing the blockage, blood is able to flow to your heart muscle.

- **Heart valve repair or replacement:** Valve repair or replacement is done when any of the heart's four valves become damaged. These valves let the blood flow into and through your heart's four chambers. Your heart has to work harder to get blood to the body when the valves are damaged.

When medicine cannot correct this problem, heart valve surgery is needed. Your surgeon will either fix the damaged valve or replace it.

## Preparing for the Hospital

While you wait for surgery (it may be days or weeks), you can get a good start on your recovery. Follow these guidelines:

- **Eat well.** Your body will need vitamins and protein to speed healing.
- **Rest.** Don't let yourself get too tired before surgery. The more rested you are, the stronger you will be.
- **Stop smoking.** Smoking makes your heart and lungs work harder than they should. This will make your recovery more difficult.
- **Exercise.** Routine exercise, as OK'd by your doctor, will help you relieve stress and help strengthen your body. Stop any exercise if you feel signs of your heart problem and call your doctor right away.
- **A day or so before your surgery** you will go to the hospital as an outpatient. During this visit, your health care team will teach you about your surgery and recovery.

Call your doctor if you have any questions about the above guidelines.

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## Preparing for the Surgery

- You may eat up to 8 hours before your procedure.
  - Eat light meals, such as oatmeal or toast.
  - Avoid foods that are heavy or high in fat, such as meat or fried foods.
- Do not use chewing tobacco 6 hours before your procedure.
- You may have clear liquids up to 2 hours before your procedure.
  - Drink water, fruit juice without pulp, black coffee, tea, hard candies and gum.
  - Do not have milk, yogurt or alcohol.
- Take your regular medicine(s) with a small sip of water.
- You will meet the staff members who will take care of you. These may include the anesthesiologist, cardiovascular care unit nurse and social services.
- You will sign a consent form for the surgery.
- Some tests are necessary before surgery and may include blood work, a chest X-ray, urine test, an electrocardiogram (EKG), vein mapping and spirometry.
- You will shower and then use a cleansing cloth with a special antiseptic solution the evening before and morning of surgery. The surgery site(s) will be clipped the day of surgery.
- You will remove any dentures and glasses or contact lenses.

- All jewelry (including body piercings) must be removed before surgery and should be left at home. If you are unable to remove a ring, special equipment will be used to cut the ring.
- You will go to the pre-anesthesia room where the anesthesiologist will connect special intravenous (IV) lines which will let your body be monitored during and after the surgery.
- Your family will be taken to the Surgical Waiting Room.

## Recovering at the Hospital

- You will be taken to your room where a nurse will watch you closely. You will be connected to tubes and machines that monitor you.
- Your family will be able to visit while you are in the intensive care phase. The nurse will talk to you and your family about the machines and what they do. You will stay in the intensive care phase until your condition is stable.
- As your body heals, the tubes and machines will be taken away and you will begin to increase your activity.
- Cardiac rehabilitation staff members will guide you in progressive exercises.
- As your healing progresses, you will receive information on how to care for yourself at home.