

Facing & Recovering from Major Surgery



Heart Valves Are For Life

4 Questions you **NEED TO ASK** before surgery

1 How do I avoid **financial surprises**?

Surgery costs and insurance coverages vary widely.

Get patient's **cost estimates** and the **name of person** or **contact number** from:

- ☐ Your surgeon
- ☐ Your healthcare provider's office (If separate)
- ☐ Your surgery center or hospital
- ☐ Your anesthesiologist
- ☐ Any home health care needed
- ☐ Your insurance, Medicare, or Medicaid

2 Is there anything I can do to help **speed up my recovery**?

Each person's recovery is subject to many factors, but here are some tips that can help.

Follow your doctor's directions - Refer to your instructions often, and remember that pain medication can also reduce inflammation and help you heal.

Plan Your Nutrition

- ☐ Eat a variety of healthy foods during your recovery. Good nutrition fuels healthy cell growth and repair.
- ☐ Prepare meals before your surgery and freeze them for a family member or neighbor to heat for you during your recovery.

Get your rest and accept help - Whether it's a meal or help managing your day to day tasks, this is the time to accept help when it's offered.

3 How can I make my recovery as **pain free as possible**?

Plan your environment and reread your discharge instructions

- Discuss your pain management routine with your physician.
- Verify all medications. List and track your doses, too.
- Be gentle and expect slow, steady progress.
- Arrange your space and lay out clothes that are easy to put on even with limited mobility.

4 What **don't** I know?

Here are some questions you should ask:

- How much weight can I safely lift?
- Who can handle my responsibilities?
- How long should I expect to take off work?
- How long until I can drive a car?
- What bills should be paid ahead of time?
- How might my thinking be affected?

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Pre-surgery **CHECKLIST**



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☐ Clarify your understanding

Learn all you can about your procedure and recovery.

- ☐ Double check by explaining it back to your doctor
- ☐ Get the contact numbers for questions
- ☐ Clarify reasons your doctor would want you to call the office

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☐ Get A Written Financial Picture

No one wants to be surprised afterwards.

- Find out what your insurance will pay
- Determine how much money you may need to pay out of pocket

Ask your hospital if a social worker may be able to help you explore options.

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☐ Verify All Medications

- List all current prescription, over the counter and supplements.
- Ask your surgeon if anything should be discontinued before surgery.
- Plan for a family member or friend to listen attentively to discharge instructions.
- Make a chart for doses needed after surgery*
- Initial or check off doses taken

*[Download a free medicine tracker here](#)



☐ Plan Your Nutrition

Post-surgery wellness is fueled by healthy food! Plan ahead.

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| ☐ Meals planned for the first week | ☐ Phone number of a friend who could pick up needed groceries |
| ☐ Preparation help planned | ☐ Healthy, no-prep snacks available (like apples or carrot sticks) |

☐ Logistics

Most people need continuing assistance in the days and weeks after surgery.

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| ☐ Friend who can drive you if needed | ☐ Transportation needs secured for several weeks following surgery | ☐ Arrange for pickup of post-surgery prescriptions |
| ☐ Friend who can accompany you if using public transportation | ☐ Arrange for pet care needs | |



10

Surprising things you **MAY NOT BE ABLE TO DO** after surgery

1 Think clearly. Surgery and pain-management medication can often hamper your thinking skills, so do not make important decisions during this time.

2 Easily sit up from a lying position

5 Get your incision wet

8 Climb the staircase

3 Raise your arms overhead for dressing

6 Lift a jug of milk

9 Run the vacuum

4 Prepare a meal

7 Tie your shoes

10 Carry a bag