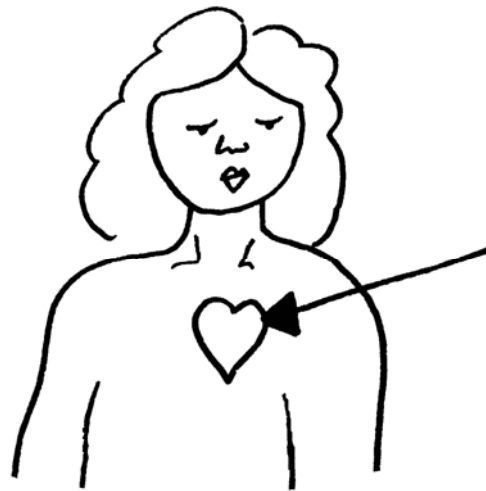
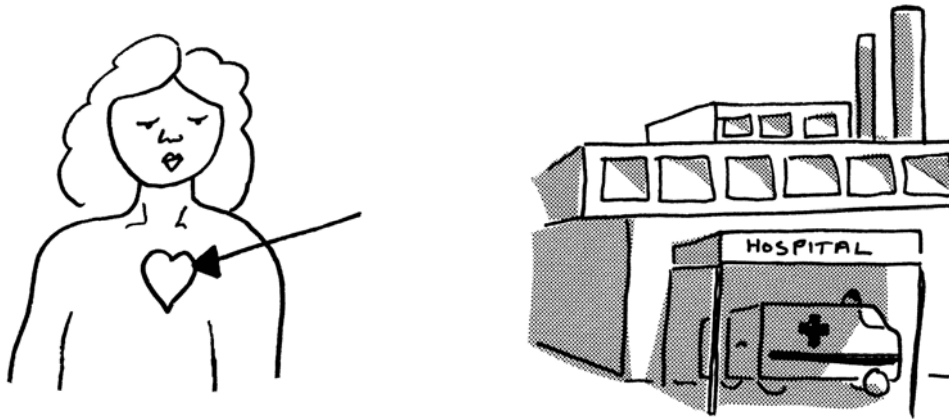


# Your Heart Surgery and Recovery





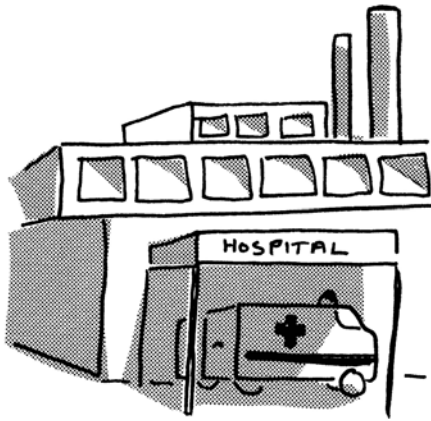
This leaflet is for people having an operation on their heart.

It tells you what normally happens and how you might feel afterwards.



There is also a checklist of things to remember when you get home from hospital.

Everyone is different so what happens to you might be slightly different.



## The day you go to hospital



You must ring the hospital in the morning before leaving your house.

This is because if there is an emergency the date of your operation might change.

You need to call the bed manager at the hospital.  
The number is **020 7573 8888** ask to speak to the Bed Manager or ask for bleep number **2090**.



Make sure you have everything you might need while you are in hospital.

There is a list on the next page with some suggestions.

# Things to take with you



You are probably going to be in hospital for about a week so it is a good idea to take some things with you.

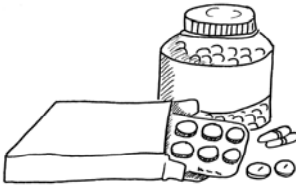
These could be:



Toothbrush and toothpaste



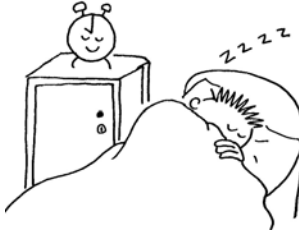
Things to wash with



Your medication



Slippers or comfortable shoes



Pyjamas or a nightdress



Clothes to wear when you go home



A small amount of money



There are cupboards for your things but they are small.

Don't bring too many things with you or things that are valuable.



## Family Visitors

There are rooms at the hospital where your family can stay the night while they are visiting you. These cost £20 a night.



To book one of the rooms call **020 7573 8888** and ask for extension **3036**.

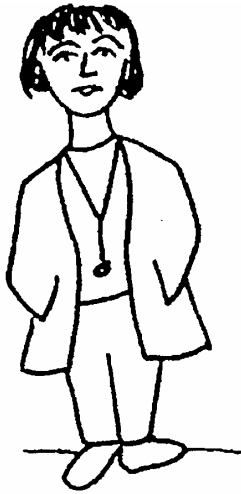


## On the ward

There are different wards in the hospital. There are some men only wards and some women only wards. Some wards are for men and women.

Talk to your nurse if this is important to you.

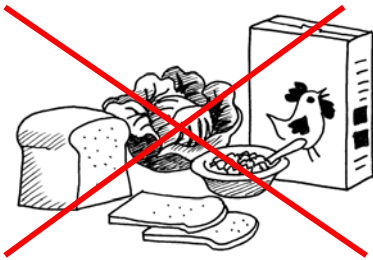
## The day before the operation



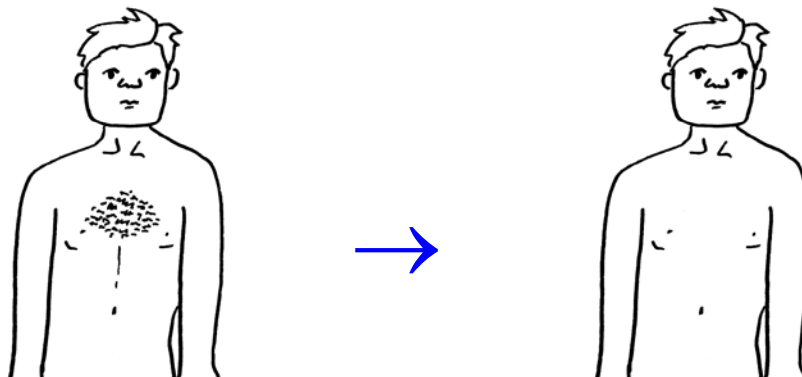
On the day before you have your operation you will be seen by the anaesthetist.

This is a special doctor who makes sure that you don't feel any pain during an operation.

They will come and talk to you about the operation. They might give you a tablet to take.



You must not eat anything for 8 hours before the operation.



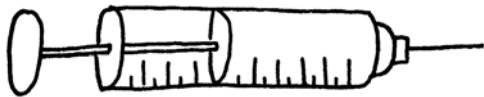
You will need to shave your chest the day before your operation. The nurses will help you with this.

# Your Operation Day



On the morning of your operation you need to have a bath or shower. This is to make sure you are clean for the operation.

You must remove any false teeth, glasses and jewellery. The nurses will give you a gown to put on.



Just before your operation the anaesthetist will put a needle in your hand to give you medicine.

This is to make sure you feel no pain during the operation. It will also make you go to sleep.

The anaesthetist will stay with you during the operation. This is to make sure that you don't wake up until after the operation is finished.



## When you wake up



When you wake up from your operation you will be in the Intensive Care Unit.

This is a special part of the hospital. You will be checked very carefully.

You will be connected to a breathing machine and have a tube in your throat that will help you breath. This will be taken out when you are awake and can breath normally.

You will have other tubes attached to your neck, your chest and your arms. These are to give you pain killers and to take fluid away from your wound.

You will also have a tube in your bladder (by your belly) to check how much you are weeing. This is called a catheter.

As you start to get better these will be taken out. The tube in your chest comes out after 1 day. The tubes in your neck and bladder will come out after 2 days.

You will be in the Intensive Care Unit for about 24 hours. Then you will be moved to another ward called the High Dependency Unit.

This is another ward where you are checked carefully.

## Back on the ward

You will go back to a regular ward two days after your operation. You will be quite tired and sore but this is normal.

You should be able to sit up in a chair by now. You can get up and walk around a bit.



When you are on the ward the physiotherapist will visit you most days.

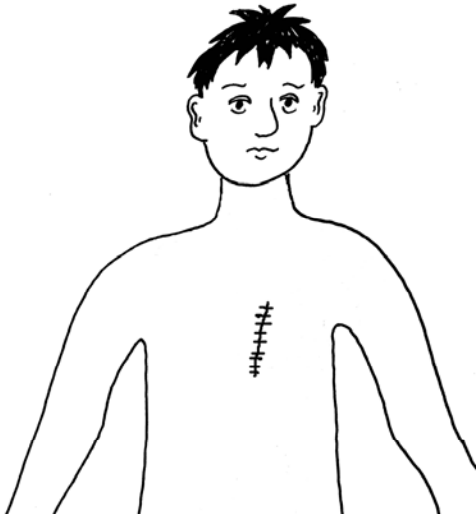
They will show you breathing and leg exercises.

It is very important that you do these exercises. They will help you to get better quicker.

After 4 or 5 days you will be feeling a bit stronger. The physiotherapist will give you more exercises, like walking up the stairs.

You should also have a bath or a shower if your wounds are healed.

## Your wounds



During your operation the surgeon had to cut through your chest bone. This is so that he could get to your heart.

After the operation the bone is then held together with wire.

After a while the bone will join back together. The wire will stay in your chest but should not cause any problems.

The doctors use a special glue to join your skin back together so you won't have stitches.

The wound on your chest will only be covered with a bandage for 1 day after the operation. After that it will be left open to the air. This is to help it heal.

When you are in hospital your wounds will be checked every day.

Sometimes there will be swelling at the top of your chest. This will go down after about 3 months.

## Going home

Your chest bone will take 6 to 8 weeks to get better.



You might need extra support when you get out of hospital.



You will need this for about 2 weeks. It is a good idea to talk to your care manager about extra support.

The nurses will talk to you about this before you go home. They can get extra support for you from Social Services.

You will be given 2 weeks of medication when you leave the hospital. You should make an appointment to see your doctor before these run out.

## Feelings



You might feel a bit upset or grumpy after your operation. You will have good days and bad days.



This is normal but if you are worried you should speak to your doctor.

## Activities



Try to go for a short walk every day.

After two weeks your walk should last for about 15 minutes.

Do a little bit more every day. After 4 weeks you should be walking for about 30 minutes every day.

This is very important and will help you get better.



After about 6 weeks you will be invited to join a heart exercise class.

This class will show you how to do more exercises. You will get a plan to help you get better.

You will also learn about looking after your heart.



Talk to the nurses in your heart class about going back to work or college.



Have sex when you feel well enough. For most people this is about 2 to 4 weeks after getting home.

Avoid long baths until your wounds are properly healed. Always dry your wounds carefully.

Do not use smelly soaps or creams until your wounds are fully healed.

You can use Simple soap and ask your chemist for aqueous cream.

Written by Mary Fry  
Adapted and made accessible by Adam Thomas

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Images from The Change Health Picture Bank and Adam Thomas