

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?

Facing & Recovering from Major Surgery

Pre-surgery **CHECKLIST**



Heart Valves Are For Life



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

notes _____



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.

notes _____



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.

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

Logistics

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

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