



## Cardiac Surgery: What to Expect

- **Home Team** (patients need help the first week they are home)
  - A spouse, significant other, family member or friend:
    - Provides support and encouragement
    - Learns medications and incision care
    - Assists with transportation, shopping, meals and follow-up appointments
- **Hospital Team** (color-coded scrubs by function)
  - Physician assistants/nurse practitioners – support surgeons, provide patient care (**maroon scrubs**)
  - Nurses – provide patient care (navy blue scrubs)
  - Clinical technicians – work with nurses, handle IVs, labs and bathing (**green scrubs**)
  - Case managers – plan for discharge
  - Home health liaisons – set up home health nurse
  - Patient care navigators – provide pre- and post-op education
  - Physical therapists/occupational therapists – evaluate patient mobility, support daily living activities, (**dark green scrubs**)
  - Specialists – provide respiratory, endocrinology and nutrition support

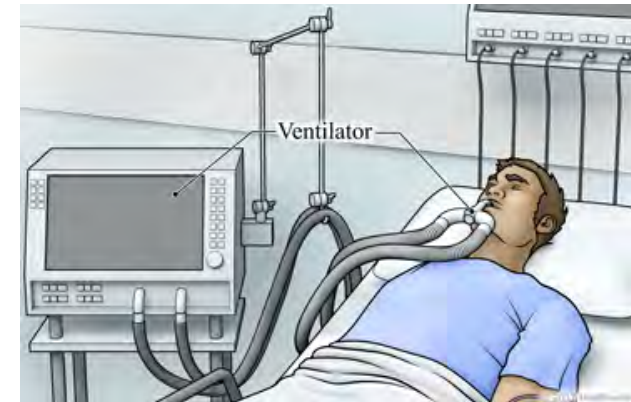
- Pre-op testing and appointments
- Medications
  - Learn which medications to stop before surgery
  - Learn about new pre-op medications
- Work arrangements
  - Return to work is based on the individual
- Home arrangements
  - Tell care team about stairs, pets, and small children
  - Arrange for transportation – no driving for approximately six weeks
    - Patient should sit in the back seat to avoid air bags
  - Enlist help

- No food or drink after midnight the day before surgery
- What to bring, what to leave at home:
  - Bring: eyeglasses, toiletries, cell phones, dentures or retainers, laptop, e-readers, CPAP, bathrobe
  - Don't bring: jewelry, at-home medications, contact lenses, valuables
- On the day of surgery:
  - Park in the Gray garage, IHVI building
    - Parking \$5/day or multiday passes (\$20 for pack of 10 passes) available to purchase at garage or gift shop – [Campus Map](#)
  - Check in at Cardiac Surgery desk on the ground floor, to the left of elevators
  - Move to Pre-Op on the second floor
  - Fill out consent forms, meet surgeon and operating room (OR) staff

- Family and friends can wait in waiting area during surgery:
  - Has status board, TV, vending machine, WiFi
  - Food available at Inova Fairfax Hospital
  - Contact with surgeon after surgery and transfer
- Please adhere to all visitation policies during your time at our facility
  - These are in place for everyone's safety



- Transfer from OR to Cardiovascular ICU (CVICU)
- Attachments to expect:
  - IVs and oxygen
  - Chest tubes
  - Telemetry box and wires
  - Pacer box and wires
  - Ventilator
  - Urinary catheter
  - Insulin drip
  - PREVENA™ wound system (not everyone)
- While in CVICU:
  - Close monitoring of vital signs
  - One to two visitors allowed
  - No flowers allowed



Transferring to CVSD = one step closer to home

- Vital signs every four hours
- Sequential compression devices (SCDs)
- Advancing diet
- Bandages, chest tubes, pacer wires, oxygen removal
- Walking...walking...walking
- Incentive spirometer, Acapella®
- Diuresis (getting rid of fluid)
- Labs – often drawn at 4 a.m.
- Work with physical therapy and occupational therapy (PT/OT)
- Informational videos available in room



- Incisional pain, chest tubes, sore throat from ventilator, general soreness and bruising
- Weight gain
- Interruptions, lack of sleep
- Poor appetite, nausea, change in taste
- Various alarms, unit noise
- Constipation



- Patients will experience some pain after surgery.
- We try to manage patients' pain without the use of narcotics.
- Patients should ask for pain medication when they need it.
- Medications can be adjusted if pain is not well managed.
- An appropriate pain goal for most patients is a 3 out of 10. Pain is different for each person.

Mild 1 – 3



**Treatments:**

Tylenol  
Repositioning/walking  
Deep breathing  
Icepack/heating pad

Moderate 4 – 6



**Treatments:**

Tramadol  
Gabapentin  
Lidoderm patch

Severe 7 – 10



**Treatments:**

Percocet  
Oxycodone  
Dilaudid

**\* Ibuprofen/Motrin/Advil/NSAIDs are not used for cardiovascular surgery patients.**

- Vital Signs
  - Heart rate and rhythm
  - Blood pressure
  - Temperature
  - Breathing
- Signs of infection
- Electrolyte imbalance
- Intake/output – fluid retention and weight
- Mobility – walking with little to no assistance
  - If you have stairs at home, you will practice stairs with PT/OT team
- Manageable pain
- Bowel movement



- **Anticoagulants** (e.g., Heparin)
  - Helps prevent blood clots. Can help lower the chance of heart attack and stroke. Also used to protect bypass grafts and stents in the heart.
- **Beta Blockers** (e.g., Metoprolol)
  - Lowers blood pressure and slows heart rate. Works by altering hormones (body chemicals) that are damaging to the heart. May strengthen the heart's pumping action over time.
- **ACE Inhibitors** (e.g., Lisinopril)
  - Lowers blood pressure and decreases strain on the heart. Makes it easier for the heart to pump and improves blood flow.
- **Antiarrhythmics** (e.g., Amiodarone)
  - Prevents or treats irregular heart rhythm.
- **Diuretics (“fluid pills”)** (e.g., Lasix)
  - Helps prevent or treat excess fluid buildup in the body.
- **Pain medications** (e.g., Tramadol, Tylenol)
  - Decreases and helps to manage postoperative pain.
- **Stool softeners/laxatives** (e.g., Miralax, Peri-Colace)
  - Prevents or treats constipation.

- Review discharge packet/after visit summary
- Get prescriptions – new and continuing
  - IHVI Pharmacy is available for prescriptions
- Schedule follow-up appointments
- Be ready to be discharged early
  - Have your ride set up and ready
- Wear loose-fitting clothes for the ride home
- Choose post-discharge care option:
  - Visit from home health liaison
  - Acute rehabilitation (short-term stay), skilled nursing\*
  - Cardiac rehabilitation (gym) – near your home, on your schedule



\* In rare cases, your care team may feel that you would benefit from additional rehabilitation and might refer you to an acute rehabilitation center or skilled nursing facility before going home. **This will be determined during your stay.**

## Necessities:

- Blood pressure cuff
- Scale
- Thermometer
- Gentle body wash (no bar soap, not scented, not antibacterial)

## Optional Items:

- Washcloths
- Shower chair
- Wedge pillow or recliner



## **Inova has post-discharge resources that can help.**

- Mended Hearts – support group for patients
- Healing after surgery
- Smoking cessation
- Heart-healthy diet
- Pastoral care (emotional and spiritual support)
- Physical activity
- Sexual activity
- Diabetes management
- Combating depression

- We look forward to seeing you soon.
- If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to reach out to one of us or your surgeon's office.

Resources and Information:

[www.inovaheart.org](http://www.inovaheart.org)

[www.inovaheart.org/mysurgery](http://www.inovaheart.org/mysurgery)

Naseem Akhtar  
Patient Care Navigator  
Inova Heart and Vascular Institute  
Cardiovascular Stepdown Unit  
703.776.8600  
[Naseem.Akhtar@inova.org](mailto:Naseem.Akhtar@inova.org)

