

After cardiac surgery

It is unlikely you will experience all the problems listed, but you will probably experience one or more. Remember they are common problems and will resolve with time.

Common things you may experience after cardiac surgery.

Depression, lack of concentration

In the days and weeks after your operation, especially as your physical condition improves, you may feel a bit depressed and frustrated. The operation you have been so anxious about is finally over. These feelings will slowly return to normal but it is not uncommon to feel this way sometimes for several months. Talk to your GP about them.

Sweats

Excessive sweating is common especially at night. If it persists for longer than a week after discharge from hospital, contact your GP.

Vision

Trouble with vision is common after heart surgery. It will improve over a short period so you are advised not to get new spectacles prescribed for two to three months.

Palpitations

It is normal to be more aware of your heartbeat after surgery. Occasionally an unevenness of heart rhythm may occur. This is especially noticeable when lying on your left side or when laying flat. This is not serious but if it persists or you feel faint see your GP.

Sleeplessness

If you are having difficulty sleeping at night, you may need to be more active during the day, take fewer naps and drink less coffee. Sleeping patterns return to normal as you recover and return to a normal lifestyle.

Constipation

Many pain-relieving medications can cause constipation. Ensure you eat a diet high in fibre, take exercise and drink plenty of fluids.

Leg numbness

If veins were taken from your legs for bypasses you may have swelling, numbness and tingling for a few weeks after your operation.

Wound

Wash your wounds daily or more often in humid weather when showering. If there is any increase in swelling, redness, discharge or pain, see your GP.

Chest wall pain

If the internal mammary artery was used as a bypass graft, it is normal to have chest wall pain for up to 12 months in some patients. Use good posture when you sit, stand and walk. Exercise tends to lessen stiffness and discomfort. Take pain medication as instructed by your doctor. Panadol is often used.

Family relationships

Illness can have many effects on relationships. People may

no longer feel secure in their roles. Strange though it may sound, a patient can feel hurt and angry at the family's ability to cope in their absence.

If there have been any long-standing problems in a relationship, sometimes surgery can bring people closer together. However, surgery can also make these problems more acute, so in some circumstances both partners need to work a little harder (sometimes one more than the other).

Remember to pay attention to your risk factors for heart disease to prevent further heart problems. Attend a cardiac rehabilitation program and continue with your home exercise.



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