

Before Cardiac Surgery

After your heart problem has been diagnosed and if surgery is needed you will be placed on a waiting list for heart surgery. How long you wait for surgery will depend on the extent of your problem.

Often your surgeon will advise you to lose weight, stop smoking and reduce your alcohol intake before surgery. It is extremely important you do this, otherwise you are at greater risk of complications after your surgery, or your surgery may be postponed. If you are finding it difficult to lose weight or stop smoking, discuss this with your GP.



While you are waiting for surgery waiting for surgery can be an anxious time for you, your family and friends. It does however give you time to prepare and discuss the operation and recovery with your family, friends and GP.

It also gives you an opportunity to plan who will care for you after discharge, how to get to and from the hospital and any other considerations such as dependent partners or pets.

Keep active

To maintain your level of fitness in preparation for surgery you are advised to walk daily. Walk at a pace you find comfortable without getting breathless, ie. at a pace where you can still talk. If angina or shortness of breath prevents this, rest and continue once you have recovered.



Walking 30 minutes a day is recommended but it doesn't have to be all at once. You can split it into three 10-minute walks if you like. If you find walking difficult discuss alternatives with your GP.

If your medical condition worsens during this time please contact your GP, who will notify the hospital of any change in your condition. If urgent go to your nearest hospital.



Once you receive your surgery date

If time permits it is important to see your GP for a check up before your admission to hospital. If you have any skin breaks, burning on urination or a cold or cough, your surgery may be postponed. However, these problems can often be rectified before admission.

Keep out of the garden and away from barbed wire fences after you receive your surgery date to minimise skin infections that could delay surgery.

Illustrations reproduced with the permission of the Heart Foundation.