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What Happens After Heart Surgery?



In the ICU, you will be watched closely by a team of highly-trained health care professionals.

What is the ICU like?

When you wake up, you might feel confused and lose track of time. But it's normal. The ICU can also be noisy and busy.

Your health care team will monitor your heart rate, blood pressure, breathing and other important vital signs.

The equipment that may be used to monitor you or assist in your recovery in the ICU includes:

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- Chest tubes — These are placed around the heart after surgery to prevent buildup inside your chest. You'll likely get medication to help you relax when the tubes are taken out. You may feel some discomfort.
- Breathing tube — This helps with your breathing during and shortly after surgery. You can't talk, eat or drink while the tube supports your breathing. It's uncomfortable, but it's usually removed within hours after surgery.

You may stay in the ICU for a few days depending on the type of surgery you had and your recovery time. Afterward, you may move to a regular hospital room.

What should I expect from my hospital stay?

- Moving in bed — You'll sit in a chair and walk with help soon after surgery. Your activity will increase each day.
- Breathing exercises — Deep breaths and gentle coughing might be uncomfortable but won't harm your incision.

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