

# Life After Valve Surgery

Congratulations! You have had Transcatheter Valve surgery and are now on the road to recovery.

After a transcatheter valve surgery, you can expect to be in the hospital for between 1 and 4 days. While you are in the hospital, use the time to rest and heal.

And ask any questions you may have about your recovery. Here are some questions to ask:

When can I get back to my day to day activities?

When can I begin exercising again?

Are there specific activities I should avoid?

Is it ok to drive?

Should I avoid alcohol or any other food and drink?

Make sure you get answers to all your questions and follow your healthcare providers' directions to ensure a smooth recovery.

When you are first discharged, you may be given medications to help reduce the risk of infection and blood clots forming.

Make sure to fill these prescriptions as soon as possible and take all of your medications exactly as prescribed.

Medications used to help prevent blood clots should be taken exactly as directed to do their job and reduce the risk of bleeding.

*"Back from 18 years ago my youngest daughter gave me a pillbox with seven days of it and multiple times in the day, and at that time I said to her "This is for old people, not for me," and I still have the same one that I use for these meds, and some of them are morning and some in the afternoon, and it truly is my only reminder on how to do it."*

Your follow-up appointment is usually made before leaving the hospital. Otherwise, call once you're at home to schedule this appointment.

Typically, these follow-up appointments are in one month with the TAVR team, in 3 months with your primary care doctor, and in 6 months with your main cardiologist.

You will need to continue routine follow-up care with your cardiologist and primary care provider.

However, if you have additional health concerns, you may have to visit the doctor sooner or more often.

Always make sure to go to each of your follow-up appointments. Not only is this a great chance to monitor the health of your heart valves, but it is a chance to ask your healthcare provider any questions you might have about your follow-up care plan.

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In addition to getting your prescriptions filled and making your follow-up appointments, your healthcare provider may recommend making lifestyle changes to further improve your overall health and protect your heart.

Lifestyle changes can include making healthy food choices, quitting smoking, and getting regular exercise. Talk to your healthcare provider about ways to make your food choices healthier. And make sure to include exercise in your daily routine.

*“We do a lot of walking, and I've got the Fitbit on my wrist all the time, and so there's even some competition about how many steps or miles we've done in a day.”*

Many people who have had transcatheter valve surgery also have other health conditions like diabetes or kidney disease.

If that is the case for you, talk to your healthcare provider about how to make healthy food choices and get exercise with those conditions in mind.

Throughout your recovery, it is important to stay in touch with your doctor and report any unusual symptoms, such as shortness of breath or heart palpitations.

These could be a sign of complications with your new valve and may need to be checked right away.

Finally, remember everyone heals and recovers at their own pace. As you recover from transcatheter valve surgery keep in mind that there is no ‘right’ way to recover.

Some people will go home quickly and bounce right back while others will spend more time in the hospital and take longer to get back to their normal daily activities.

*“Probably within a week or so and because I was encouraged to get out and do the walking that we'd been doing beforehand, so it was relatively short time.”*

Take your time to rest, heal and follow all of your healthcare providers' instructions.