

Minimally Invasive Heart Valve Repair or Replacement

Your heart pumps blood throughout your body. It has 4 valves. With every heartbeat, they open and close like doors to keep blood flowing the right way through your heart.

Sometimes a valve may leak or become narrow. A leaky valve no longer closes all the way, letting blood flow backward. This problem is called regurgitation.

If a valve narrows, it may not open all the way, slowing the forward flow of blood. This problem is called stenosis.

Minimally invasive heart valve surgery repairs or replaces a damaged heart valve.

Before surgery, you'll be given medicines that put you to sleep.

This surgery can be done multiple ways. The exact procedure you have will depend on your heart valve problem.

These surgeries are called minimally invasive because they are not open heart procedures. Instead of cutting through your breastbone, your surgeon will only make small cuts to reach your heart.

Depending on the type of surgery you have, your surgeon may make one or several small cuts in your chest to reach your heart.

Another option is to make a small cut in your upper thigh. Your surgeon then puts a thin tube called a catheter into a blood vessel. They guide the catheter to your damaged heart valve. This can also be done through cuts in your stomach or neck, but those are less common.

After the cuts are made, your heart may be stopped with medicine. If so, you will be connected to a heart-lung machine to keep blood pumping throughout your body during the surgery.

To repair a valve, your surgeon may trim, shape, or rebuild one or both of the flaps to help them work better. Or they may reinforce the ring of tissue that supports the valve.

If your surgeon is using a catheter, they may use tools like a balloon to widen a narrowed valve. Or attach a clip to a valve to help it close better.

If the valve is beyond repair, your surgeon removes it. They replace it with a mechanical valve or one made of human or animal tissue.

When the repair or replacement is done, your surgeon will restart your heart if needed. Then they will close the cut in your chest.

After surgery, you may be in the hospital for 3 or more days. It usually takes a few weeks to fully recover.

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Minimally invasive heart valve repair or replacement surgery can improve blood flow, help you feel better, and prolong your life. These options generally involve less pain and a faster recovery compared to traditional open-heart surgery.

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