



Heart Valves Are For Life

THINK OF YOUR RECOVERY AS A POSITIVE JOURNEY YOU'RE TAKING TO ENRICH YOUR LIFE AND HEALTH. After surgery, it's important to find ways to think positively and to feel as good as you can. Studies show that some patients struggle with depression after a major surgery like heart surgery, and **depression can seriously slow down recovery.**

DON'T WORRY about depression; **DO WHAT YOU CAN TO PREVENT IT** and **TELL YOUR DOCTOR** if you notice symptoms or feel that you are really struggling. Write down your progress. It helps you to take time to notice the good things that are happening. If you write them down, you will push yourself to take note of what's going right.

Post Surgery Milestones

DAY 1

DAY 1 – YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY

You may feel **groggy and confused**, especially if you're attached to unfamiliar IVs and machines. **BUT pay attention** to what's going on to help you get better!

Do your best to follow post-op instruction — It's a step toward your full recovery.

Enjoy your progress even if you're just moving from lying down to sitting up. **That's progress!**

Even if it hurts, celebrate those first steps. Even just walking to the bathroom is an important part of moving forward.



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS



My moment of achievement on my first day:



I am thankful for: _____

DAYS 1-3

DAYS 1-3

Be gentle with yourself. It may still be a bit awkward, but during this phase, you may be able to shower, get dressed, remove machines and IVs.

All of these small moments are steps toward feeling more like yourself again. It can be easy to focus on how you're not better yet, but you'll do yourself and your recovery a favor if you do your best to reframe it toward the positive.

By the end of day three, you will likely be able to plan to do some enjoyable activities:

- choose some movies
- read a good book
- invite a friend to come by you'll enjoy
- or play a board game with your child



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS



Enjoyable moment: _____

I am grateful for: _____

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Post Surgery Milestones

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DAYS 5-10

WEEKS 2-3

WEEKS 6-10

3 MONTHS

DAYS 5-10

You will likely notice significant progress during this time.

Sutures may be removed, mobility will be encouraged.

This is an important time to be gentle with yourself, remembering you're still recovering **AND** to focus on how you're improving at a nice pace.

This period and the next are times when some people experience **post-surgery depression** so take care of your emotional journey toward recovery, too. Allow yourself to **enjoy your progress** as much as you can.



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS



What improvements are you noticing? _____

What seems to be getting easier or less painful in the last few days? _____

What have you been able to enjoy about your recovery? _____

WEEKS 2-3 AND BEYOND

Are you setting some small, achievable goals for yourself?

Some people expect to feel recovered by this time, but full recovery will take a while.

You will still need plenty of rest, but you'll also want to gradually ease back into a more active life. Plan some very gentle activities you enjoy, or start going on very short strolls.

By the end of week three, you may be able to start easing back into a predictable schedule.

- Plan gentle outings with friends
- Walk around the block if you're cleared for mild exercise
- Enjoy a meal out with the family
- Before long, you'll likely start cardiac rehab



TRACK YOUR PROGRESS



Enjoyable moment: _____

I am grateful for: _____