

While you are in the hospital you will hear some words and phrases which may be unfamiliar but are frequently used. Here are some of the terms and phrases.

Anesthesiologist. This physician gives the proper anesthetic or medicine to help block out pain and make you sleep during the operation.

Arterial Line, or “A Line.” This is like an IV but is placed into an artery, usually in your wrist but sometimes in the top of your foot or groin. It gives the doctors another way of measuring your blood pressure and also enables them to draw blood without having to stick you every time.

Blood Pressure. The measurement of the pressure in your body that helps us see how well your heart is working.

Blood Pressure Cuff. This is a wide piece of fabric that gently hugs your arm. It allows us to measure your blood pressure.

Cardiac Surgeon. This is the head of the team of specialists who will actually operate on your heart.

Chest PT or chest physiotherapy. After your operation, it is normal for some congestion to collect in your lungs. Physical therapists are trained to help you cough this up and loosen the congestion. They do this by gently but firmly patting on your back. Later, they will help you build up your lungs by showing you how to blow a pinwheel or an incentive spirometer.

Chest Tubes. These clear plastic tubes (about the size of a pencil) are placed in your chest during your operation to drain excess blood and fluid that builds up in the chest cavity during the operation.

Echo, or echocardiogram. The echocardiogram allows the doctors to look at your heart while it is beating. A technician will attach tiny stickers on your shoulders and your side, then put some jelly on your chest and move a small monitor (much like a microphone) over your chest area. The pictures will be recorded on the TV screen next to you. The picture is actually produced by sound waves. You must be very still for the pictures to be clear.

EKG, or electrocardiogram. This is a test that shows your heart’s electrical activity. A lot of stickers will be placed on your chest. These will be attached to a monitoring machine which will give the doctors more information about your heart.

Electrodes. These are round stickers placed on your chest and attached to a monitor or TV screen so we can watch how your heart is working.

Extubated. After you are asleep in the operating room, a tube will be inserted in your lungs; the tube is attached to a machine that will do your breathing for you. It allows your heart and lungs time to recover from your operation without having

to do all the work. When the tube is removed when you are better, you are “extubated.”

Foley Catheter. A small tube that is inserted into your bladder. Its job is to drain urine out into a bag that is attached to your bed. This allows the nurse or doctor to measure how well your kidneys are working. It is usually placed after you are asleep for your operation.

Heart Catheterization (or Cath or Angiogram) This is a special test done in the Cath Lab that provides very important information about your heart condition. During the cath, your doctor can check the different pressures in the lungs and heart and take pictures of how the heart is actually working. He does this by passing a very fine catheter through one of your veins up to your heart, so he can take pictures of the inside of your heart.

Heart Failure. This *does not* mean that your heart has failed. It refers to the times when your heart is acting sick.

Holding Area. This is a large room where surgical patients are taken just before they are to go into surgery. Two of your family members may go and stay with you until you are taken into the OR.

Intubated. After you are asleep in the operating room, a tube will be inserted in your lungs; the tube is attached to a machine that will do your breathing for you. While the tube is in, you will be “intubated.” It allows your heart and lungs time to recover from your operation without having to do all the work.

IV. Intravenous or straight into the vein. By establishing an IV line, doctors and nurses can give you medicines and take blood samples without having to stick you each time.

NG Tube. This stands for the nasogastric tube which will be inserted through your nose to your stomach to keep air from collecting and also to keep your stomach empty. This will usually be done after you are asleep in the operating room. When it is in place you will not feel anything and the tube will be taped to the side of your nose and cheek just to keep it from slipping. If necessary you can also be fed through this tube.

NPO. Refers to the Latin words (*nil per os*) that mean "nothing by mouth." Your doctor will give these orders usually 6-8 hours before your operation and it means you cannot eat or drink anything at that time. This is ordered after your surgery as well. It is to keep you from choking

Operating Room (OR). This is the room where you will have your operation. There will be many people in surgical gowns and masks but you will be asleep most of the time you are in there.

Oxygen mask. This is used to give you special air called oxygen. The mask is a clear plastic cup that fits over your nose and mouth. This is hooked to a bottle of oxygen that can be carried around with you.

Pacemaker. About the size of a chalkboard eraser, this small box is attached to you with wires that were placed on your heart during the operation. It will be turned on if your heart needs help beating more regularly.

Pediatric Cardiologist. This is the doctor who will take care of you before and after your heart surgery and after you have gone home. This doctor specializes in taking care of hearts in children.

PICU (Pediatric Intensive Care Unit). (Say “pick you.”) This is the hospital unit where you will be cared for after your operation. The PICU staff specializes in taking care of children after their heart operations (or post-op).

Post-Op. After the operation, such as a post-op visit to the doctor.

Pre-Op. Before the operation, such as pre-op workup.

Pulse Oximeter (“Pulse ox”). This band-aid with a red light attached is taped on your finger to measure the oxygen level in your blood.

Recovery room. The room where the nurses and doctors will monitor your progress immediately after you leave the operating room (OR). You will be in the recovery room for only a short time.

Respirator or breathing machine or the ventilator. This machine is attached to a tube which is inserted into your lungs to do your breathing for you. This is done after you are asleep in the operating room. While the tube is in, you will be “intubated” and when it is removed, you will be “extubated”. It allows your heart and lungs time to recover from your operation without having to do all the work.

Respiratory Therapy staff. While you are on the breathing machine, these specialists come by to check your oxygen and listen to your lungs. They also take care of the respirator.

Stethoscope. This tool lets the doctors and nurses listen to your heart and lungs. They might let you listen also.

Suction. This acts like a small vacuum that is used to clean out your breathing tube or your NG tube. This is to prevent mucus from clogging up the tube.

X-Ray. This camera takes pictures of the inside of your body. X-rays can tell the doctors the size and position of your heart and lungs. The X-ray technologist will ask you to be very still while they are taking the pictures. She will move the camera around to get the best view for your doctors. While you will not feel anything, you may hear a buzz while the camera is actually taking the picture.