



# Enhanced Recovery After Cardiac Surgery Program

A guide to your child's surgical journey  
at Boston Children's Hospital



**Boston  
Children's  
Hospital**

Benderson Family  
Heart Center

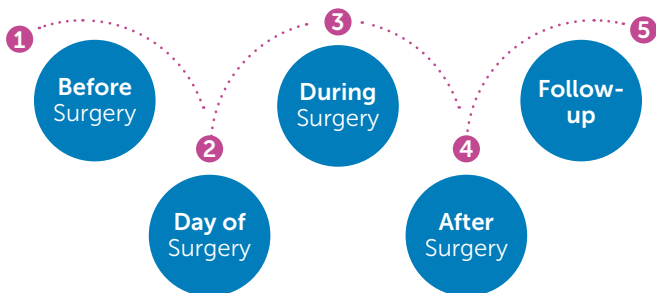
# The ERAS Cardiac Program

## What is the program about?

The Enhanced Recovery After Cardiac Surgery program is a new approach to improve your child's recovery after congenital heart surgery. We often refer to the program as "ERAS Cardiac" or, more simply, "ERAS."

We think of it as a journey that includes important strategies before, during, and after surgery to reduce stress on the body, decrease complications, and shorten time spent in the hospital.

## The ERAS Cardiac Journey



## How do these strategies help?

Research has shown that when a child follows pre- and post-surgery strategies focused on diet, medication, and movement, their body recovers faster and better after a procedure. Together, the strategies add up:

### Less fasting

Drinking clear fluids up to one hour before surgery can improve the body's stress response by preventing dehydration and sugar swings.



### Multiple approaches to treat pain

Using a combination of medications and local or regional anesthesia helps reduce pain and discomfort after surgery, and it decreases the need for opioids. This strategy improves the ability to move and reduces the negative effects of opioids on gut and lung function, lessening nausea and helping your child return to a normal diet.

### Removing tubes, catheters and IVs

Once surgery is over and it is safe, we will remove the breathing tube. Other tubes, catheters, and IVs will be removed as soon as they are no longer needed. These measures help reduce your child's pain and allow them to get out of bed easier.

### Moving around

Getting out of bed after surgery reduces pain, prevents blood clot formation, and allows the body to recover. Your child's nurse will help guide you and your child.



# Five Steps of the Journey

## Step 1

### Before surgery

Your child's ERAS surgical journey includes a preoperative appointment to help prepare you and your child for what to expect with surgery and the recovery while you are in the hospital. We will detail the entire process and answer any questions you may have.

## Step 2

### Day of surgery

While they are not allowed to eat, we encourage your child to drink clear fluids up to one hour before the procedure. We recommend apple juice, Pedialyte®, or a sports drink. In the clinic, we will provide age-specific dietary recommendations for your child. Our goal is to reduce their metabolic stress and prevent dehydration.

## Step 3

### During surgery

Your surgical and anesthesia teams work together during surgery. The techniques proposed will be discussed during your preoperative visit. Local or regional anesthesia techniques may be recommended to optimize pain control.

#### Step 4

### After surgery

We will remove the breathing tube soon after surgery, sometimes in the operating room. Other tubes, catheters, and IVs are also removed as soon as it is safe, to minimize discomfort and allow early mobilization. After surgery, we use a combination of medications to manage pain such as:

- acetaminophen (Tylenol®)
- non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)
- opioids, for acute pain when it is moderate or severe

#### Step 5

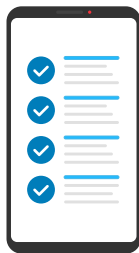
### Follow-up

After you return home, your child will have appointments with their primary care team, including their pediatrician and cardiologist. In addition, you will have a virtual follow-up appointment 5-10 days after discharge to see how your child is healing.



## Getting Your Feedback

In addition to the virtual visit, you will receive reminders asking you to complete three brief surveys. Each survey consists of a few quick questions. Your responses provide us with a better understanding of how your child is recovering.



Your responses will be shared with your care team at Boston Children's, but please note that the site is not monitored 24/7 and we won't immediately see your survey. If you have any questions or concerns, contact your care team directly.

**For urgent health issues or emergencies, CALL 911 or go to the nearest emergency room.**

Your opinion is very important to us. Let us know what we have done well and where we can improve. Remember, we are on this journey together!

## Contact Us

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[bostonchildrens.org/programs/eras-cardiac](https://bostonchildrens.org/programs/eras-cardiac)