



UNDERSTANDING YOUR Heart Surgery

 **The Elliot**
A Member of  **SOLUTIONHEALTH**

Heart and
Vascular Center

Understanding Open Heart Surgery

A recommendation for open heart surgery can feel overwhelming. At The Elliot Heart and Vascular Center, we are here to guide you and your loved ones every step of the way—with clear communication, advanced surgical care, and the compassion you deserve.

What Is Open Heart Surgery?

Open heart surgery is a procedure where a surgeon opens the chest to operate on the heart. It’s used to treat a range of serious heart conditions such as:

- ✓ Coronary artery disease
- ✓ Heart valve disease
- ✓ Heart rhythm disorders
- ✓ Congenital (inborn) heart defects
- ✓ Heart failure or structural damage

In most cases, the heart is temporarily stopped, and a heart-lung machine supports your circulation while the surgeon repairs or replaces valves, bypasses blocked arteries, or corrects structural issues.

At The Elliot Heart and Vascular Center, your surgery will be performed by a skilled, multidisciplinary team using the most advanced techniques available.



Common Conditions Treated

Coronary Artery Disease (CAD):

Fatty buildup narrows or blocks the coronary arteries, reducing blood flow to the heart. This is treated with Coronary Artery Bypass Graft (CABG) surgery, where healthy blood vessels are used to bypass blocked ones.

To fix it, the surgeon takes a new piece of blood vessel (a little tube that carries blood) from another part of the body – usually from the leg or arm – and use it like a detour or a shortcut around the blockage to restore blood flow.

Valve Disease:

- **Stenosis:** Narrowing that restricts blood flow.
- **Regurgitation:** Leakage that causes backward flow. Treatment may include valve repair or valve replacement depending on the severity

Before Your Surgery

Your care team will guide you every step of the way as you prepare. Here are a few tests you may need:

- Echocardiogram
- Cardiac catheterization
- Pulmonary function tests
- Anesthesia consult
- Dental clearance
- Blood work, urinalysis
- EKG, chest X-ray
- Carotid ultrasound
- Vein mapping

Frequently Asked Questions

What is cardiothoracic surgery?

Cardiothoracic surgery refers to surgical procedures that treat conditions of the heart, lungs, and chest. At The Elliot, our focus is on advanced heart surgery, including bypass surgery, valve repair and replacement, and procedures for irregular heart rhythms.

What is the difference between bypass and open heart surgery?

Bypass surgery is a type of open heart surgery used to treat blocked coronary arteries. “Open heart” refers to the surgical approach—typically involving a chest incision—while “bypass” describes the procedure itself, where a vein or artery is used to create a new route for blood flow around a blockage.

How long is the recovery after heart surgery?

Heart surgery recovery time depends on the type of procedure and your overall health. Most patients stay in the hospital for 4-6 days after open heart surgery, with full recovery taking several weeks to a few months. Our care team supports you through every step—including cardiac rehab, medication management, and follow-up visits.

Will I meet my surgeon before the operation?

Absolutely. At The Elliot, patients meet with their cardiothoracic surgeon well before surgery to review the care plan, ask questions, and build a relationship. Our program is designed to give you time with your surgeon and care team, so you feel confident, informed, and supported.

Is cardiac surgery safe for older adults?

Yes, many older adults benefit from heart surgery, especially with today’s advances in surgical techniques and anesthesia. Your care team will evaluate your overall health to determine the safest and most effective treatment plan.

Where will my open heart surgery be performed?

Your open heart surgery will be performed at The Elliot Hospital in Manchester, NH, home to our full-service Cardiothoracic Surgery program. Our operating rooms are equipped with advanced technology, and your care is delivered by a highly experienced surgical team, right here in southern New Hampshire—so you don’t have to travel far for expert heart care.

Will I need cardiac rehab after heart surgery?

Yes. Most patients benefit from cardiac rehabilitation as part of their recovery after heart surgery. Cardiac rehab is a medically supervised program that includes exercise, education, and support to help you heal, regain strength, and reduce your risk of future heart problems. At The Elliot, we coordinate your rehab through our experienced team to ensure a safe, personalized recovery plan close to home.



Heart and Vascular Center

Cardiothoracic Surgical Office

4 Elliot Way, Suite 201

Manchester, NH 03103

Phone: 603-314-6350 | Fax 603-314-6359