



Top 10 Things to Know About Choosing a Heart Surgeon

As the region's leading heart care provider, Scripps offers many of the most advanced surgical options for patients with serious heart conditions and diseases. The experience and expertise of our cardiovascular surgeons have helped make Scripps the choice of more heart patients than anyone else in the region. Plus, our new Prebys Cardiovascular Institute provides the most advanced cardiac diagnostic and treatment options for the entire Scripps system, bringing together leading researchers, physicians, surgeons, staff and technological innovations—all to provide you with the best possible heart care.

If you or a loved one needs heart surgery, this guide will help you choose the heart surgeon and hospital that are right for you.

What Kind of Heart Surgery Do You Need?

Heart surgery may be recommended for several conditions, including heart disease, coronary artery disease, heart failure, and blocked or diseased valves. In some cases, these procedures may be done with minimally invasive techniques.

Choosing a heart surgeon can depend on several factors, such as the type of surgery, the surgeon's areas of expertise and hospital affiliations. Here are 10 suggestions to help find the right cardiovascular surgeon for you.

How to Choose a Heart Surgeon



- 1. Select a surgeon with extensive experience in the surgery you need.** Experience matters. Hospitals with a high volume of patients have been shown to have better patient outcomes, so it makes sense to choose a surgeon affiliated with a hospital that is a leader in cardiac surgery. Scripps surgeons perform nearly 1,200 heart surgeries annually — more than any other surgical group in San Diego.
- 2. Look for national recognition by objective, trusted sources.** This is an excellent indication of a heart program's quality. For more than a decade, U.S. News & World Report has consistently named Scripps to its annual list of America's Best Hospitals for cardiology and heart surgery for our innovative care, expansive scope of services and unparalleled commitment to quality.
- 3. Consider a hospital's affiliations with other health systems.** This can be an indication of its surgeons' expertise and its quality of care. For more than 30 years, Scripps has been chosen by Kaiser Permanente as its partner in cardiac care, and is the exclusive provider of cardiac surgery to Kaiser Permanente members throughout the county.
- 4. Seek out surgeons who are experts in the most advanced diagnostic and treatment options.** They often can provide the highest quality care with the safest procedures possible, such as minimally invasive surgical techniques and robotic-assisted heart surgery. Scripps surgeons are widely recognized for groundbreaking work in cardiac procedures, including the first percutaneous (through a catheter) cardiac valve replacement in San Diego.
- 5. Ask about cardiac research and clinical trial programs.** These may offer access to new medications or therapies before they are available to all patients. Scripps is a leader in research and offers multiple ongoing clinical trials for cardiac patients.
- 6. Look for fellowship programs in cardiology.** Teaching programs like those at Scripps train tomorrow's doctors in the newest and most innovative treatments and often, the physicians who lead these programs also teach at national symposiums and are recognized experts in their field.
- 7. Seek referrals from people you trust.** Your cardiologist, primary care physician and other medical professionals you know may have recommendations. Talk to friends and family members who have had excellent heart care and good outcomes.
- 8. Make sure the hospital can provide expert care for any contingencies.** Ideally, your heart surgery will go smoothly with no complications, but if a problem does arise, you want to have the necessary care available. Also consider whether your hospital offers a robust and experienced heart team, home-based support programs, education and other resources to help you recover as quickly as possible.

- 9. Choose an experienced surgeon with whom you feel comfortable.** A good surgeon will be willing to discuss all of the options available to you and the pros and cons of each, and should welcome your questions and provide helpful answers. In addition to experience, board certification by the American Board of Thoracic Surgery is another important measure of quality.
- 10. Check with your health plan.** Your health insurance provider can tell you which hospitals and surgeons are included in your coverage, and what you need to do if the surgeon you want is not on your plan.

Leading Cardiovascular Advancements

Scripps cardiac specialists perform many of the most innovative and advanced cardiovascular surgery options available, including:

- Coronary artery bypass surgery (CABG)
- Valve repair and replacement, including percutaneous mitral valve repair
- Aneurysm surgery
- Robotic–assisted surgery for cardiac arteries and valves
- Atrial and ventricular septal defect repairs
- Cardiac arrhythmia surgery, including the maze procedure
- Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD) procedure for advanced and end-stage heart failure
- Transcatheter Aortic Valve Replacement (TAVR)

Contact Us

For a referral to a Scripps cardiac surgeon, call **858-914-4240** or visit scripps.org/HeartSurgeons.