



The Society of Cardiothoracic Surgeons of
Great Britain and Ireland



Parliamentary
and Health Service
Ombudsman

Surgery and risk

A guide for patients

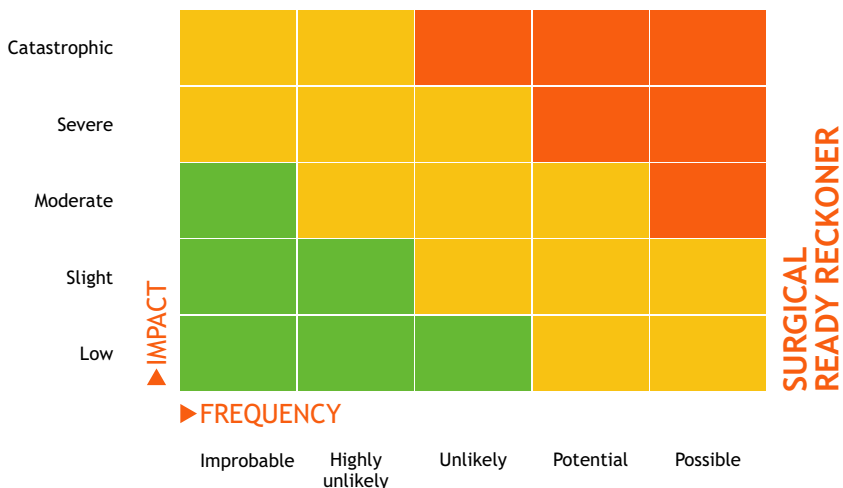
The chart overleaf will help give you - the patient - an idea of some of the risks involved in your surgery. This will help you to make decisions about the value of surgery and its possible impact on your life expectancy and lifestyle.

You can ask your surgeon to fill in the blank chart for you - this will give you a written record of your discussion about risk that you can take away and consider.

All surgery carries some risk of 'adverse events' (depending on your surgery these might include bleeding, infection or stroke). Only you can decide what impact any particular 'adverse event' might have on you and your lifestyle.

In understanding risk you will need to know what adverse events might happen and understand how frequently these happen and the impact they might have on your lifestyle (see the other side of this leaflet for an explanation of what your surgeon means by 'frequency' and 'impact').

Your surgeon will show you where the risks fall on the chart. These cannot be shown as exact points on the chart as their frequency and impact will fall within a range.



The *Frequency* of an event can be described as:

- **Improbable** - unlikely to happen, exceptional circumstances only.
- **Highly unlikely** - occurs annually in the UK.
- **Unlikely** - has occurred in the last three to five years in this unit / surgeon's practice.
- **Potential** - occurs annually in this unit or in this surgeon's practice.
- **Possible** - occurs weekly / monthly in this unit or in this surgeon's practice.

The *Impact* on lifestyle can be divided into:

- **Catastrophic** - permanent disability or death.
- **Severe** - marked reduction in quality of life which is permanent or which leads to a recovery period of more than a year, and/or more than 10 days extra spent in hospital.
- **Moderate** - temporary pain, disability and/or reduction in quality of life with recovery within one to two months and/or up to 10 days extra spent in hospital, an extra operation required.
- **Slight** - temporary discomfort or loss of function, less than three days extra hospital stay, recovery within one month.
- **Low** - transient discomfort, no extra hospital stay.