

Headline **Bill Clinton's heart operation a success: Doctor**
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Bill Clinton's heart operation a success: Doctor

NEW YORK: Bill Clinton was expected to make a full recovery after heart surgery Thursday, his doctor said, stressing that the former US president had not had a heart attack.

"The procedure went very smoothly," his doctor Allan Schwartz told a news conference in New York outside the hospital where Clinton was being treated.

"His prognosis is excellent."

Schwartz said that Clinton "did not have a heart attack or any damage to his heart."

Clinton, who underwent quadruple bypass surgery to free four blocked arteries in 2004, had been complaining of chest pain, so on Thursday doctors inserted two stents to free up a coronary artery.

Schwartz said Clinton could be "back in the office on Monday" and could "resume his very active lifestyle."

The Democratic former president, 63, was already up and visiting with his wife, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and their daughter

Chelsea, the doctor said.

It was possible he would be released from hospital later yesterday, Schwartz said.

Since leaving office in 2001, after two terms, Clinton has maintained a hectic lifestyle, most recently as a coordinator for aid to victims of Haiti's earthquake.

However, the complication treated on Thursday was "not a result of his lifestyle or his diet, both of which have been excellent," Schwartz said.

Hillary Clinton rushed from Washington to the Columbia Campus of New York Presbyterian Hospital to be with him.

The State Department said she had delayed her departure on a planned trip to the Gulf by one day, to today.

President Barack Obama, a fellow Democrat, telephoned Clinton to wish him a speedy recovery and was told by the ex-president that he felt "absolutely great," a White House official said.

George W Bush, a Republican who replaced Clinton in the White House and is now working alongside him as a relief coordinator for Haiti, said he was "glad" to hear

Clinton felt better.

Another well-wisher was UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon who thanked Clinton for his work in Haiti.

Clinton spokesman Douglas Band said the former president emerged from the operation "in good spirits, and will continue to focus on the work of his foundation and Haiti's relief and long-term recovery efforts."

While in the White House, Clinton famously indulged his appetites, including junk food, but in his post-presidential days he appeared to have been adhering to a stricter diet as well as a busy work schedule.

In a 2005 interview just months after the bypass surgery, he told CNN that prior to going under the knife he realised "I was very close to having a serious heart attack.

"I had big-time blockage. And I felt very grateful to be going under the surgery without serious damage to my heart so I thought I could make a recovery. Still it was kind of a mystical, interesting experience," he said.

Friends describe him as unable to slow down.

"He doesn't have an accelerator, but a switch, and that switch is on 23 hours a day, and that is one speed, full speed ahead," James Carville, Bill Clinton's former campaign manager, told CNN.

Just last week Clinton

paid his second visit to Haiti in a bid to get aid moving to the Caribbean nation struck by a 7.0-magnitude quake on January 12, and apologised for the slow arrival of relief supplies.

Since leaving office Clinton has through his foundation also battled to raise awareness of AIDS, pushed for tsunami recovery in Asia and pressed for more relief to Haiti.

Clinton was sworn in on January 20, 1993 as the 42nd US president and the first Democrat to hold the highest office in 12 years.

He won a second term in 1996.

He remains hugely influential on the US political landscape, and is revered by Democrats for presiding over an economic boom time in the United States.

But his scandalous affair with intern Monica Lewinsky during his presidency, and the impeachment proceedings that followed, tarnished his political legacy. — AFP

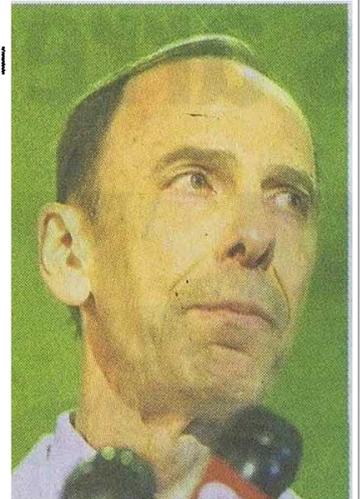
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Dr Allan Schwartz