Although essential at birth, the PDA normally closes itself shortly after birth. There must be adequate mixing of the red and blue blood to reduce cyanosis (low oxygen levels). In newborn infants a procedure is done in the cardiac catheterization lab to remove the atrial septum (balloon atrial septostomy). This allows sufficient mixing of the red and blue blood. This atrial septum defect is closed when the surgical procedure (arterial switch) is done. If the PDA is adequate, this palliative (temporary) procedure may not be necessary.

To correct the problem, the aorta and the pulmonary artery are moved to their proper position (arterial switch). The ASD is closed using a patch. The PDA is tied off and/or cut. The coronary arteries must also be moved during this operation. The coronary arteries are the very small blood vessels that supply the heart muscle itself with oxygen-rich blood.

The surgery is done through a median sternotomy (chest) incision.