



What Is Cardiac Rehabilitation?

Cardiac rehabilitation is a medically-supervised program to improve your heart health after heart problems or surgery. It can take place at an outpatient clinic or in a hospital rehab center.

You don't have to face heart disease alone. Cardiac rehab is a team effort. Your team may include doctors, nurses, exercise specialists, dietitians, nutritionists and others. Their goal is to help you make lifestyle choices to improve your heart health.

Ask your health care professional if you're eligible for a cardiac rehab program. If you are, ask for a referral in your area.



Who needs cardiac rehab?

You may benefit from cardiac rehab if you have or have had a:

- Heart attack in the last 12 months
- Heart condition, such as coronary artery disease, stable angina or heart failure
- Peripheral artery disease
- Heart procedure or surgery, including:
 - Coronary artery bypass graft surgery
 - Angioplasty and stenting
 - Heart valve repair or replacement
 - Pacemaker or implantable cardioverter defibrillator
 - Heart or lung transplant

What happens in a rehab program?

Many people find that cardiac rehab programs are very helpful after getting out of the hospital. They allow people to join a group to exercise and to get help in making lifestyle changes. A cardiac rehab program usually includes 36 sessions over 12 weeks. But it can vary depending on your condition and your health care professional's recommendations.

During rehab, you will:

- Have a medical evaluation to figure out your needs and limitations. The medical staff then tailors a program to your needs.
- Exercise on a treadmill, bike, rowing machine or walking/jogging track.
- Be monitored by a health care professional for a change in symptoms.
- Follow a safe physical activity program that gradually improves your strength.
- Slowly move into a more intensive program that lets you work longer and harder.
- Begin strength training, if your health care professional says you can.
- Have your heart rate, blood pressure and EKG monitored.

After you've completed the program, you may feel a lot better. It's important to continue to make these lifestyle changes a part of your life after rehab.

Rehab can help you return to an active life, reduce your risk of further heart problems and improve your quality of life.

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How else can a cardiac rehab program help me?

- You may go to classes or get help to quit smoking.
- A nutritionist will help you create a healthy eating plan.
- You'll improve your fitness level.
- You'll be weighed and advised on how to lose weight if you need to.
- You can learn relaxation skills to help manage and reduce stress.
- You may meet others who've been through a similar event.

Is cardiac rehab covered by insurance?

Medicare and most other insurance plans reimburse for cardiac rehab for the conditions discussed. Check with your medical team and insurance company to confirm if cardiac rehab is covered under your plan.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1** Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721) or visit heart.org to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2** Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at HeartInsight.org.
- 3** Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at heart.org/SupportNetwork.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

How often and how long should I go to rehab?

Is cardiac rehab covered by my health insurance?

MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk of heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit heart.org/AnswersByHeart to learn more.