

# **HEART HEALTH and CARDIAC REHABILITATION**

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## **Acknowledgement**

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## **THE KEYS TO HEART HEALTH**

The following information can help you learn how to lower your risk for future heart problems. You will also learn tips for planning a cardiac rehabilitation program that is right for you.

### **EXERCISE**

Regular physical activity that is tailored to your abilities, needs, interests and resources.

### **EDUCATION**

Learning about your heart problem, its causes and treatments, and how you can manage it.

### **COUNSELLING AND SUPPORT**

Advice on why and how to change your lifestyle to lower your risk of further heart problems and return to a full and productive life.

### **BEHAVIOUR CHANGE**

Learning specific skills to enable you to make choices about changing unhealthy behaviours such as smoking, or to begin heart healthy behaviours such as eating a heart healthy diet.

## RECOVERING FROM HEART PROBLEMS THROUGH CARDIAC REHABILITATION

Cardiac rehabilitation services are designed to help patients with heart disease recover faster and return to full and productive lives. Cardiac rehabilitation includes exercise, education, counselling and support, and learning new ways to live a healthier life. Together with medical and surgical treatments, cardiac rehabilitation can help you feel better and live a healthier life.

You can benefit from cardiac rehabilitation if:

- you have heart disease, such as angina or heart failure, or have had a heart attack
- you have a chronic heart problem
- you have had coronary artery bypass surgery or a valve replacement
- you have an implanted defibrillator
- you have had a balloon catheter (angioplasty), a stent, or other cardiac procedure
- you have had a heart transplant.

You can also benefit from cardiac rehabilitation if you are at risk of heart disease.

**Cardiac rehabilitation can make a difference.** It is a safe and effective way to help you:

- feel better faster, emotionally and physically
- get stronger
- get to know how to reduce stress
- adjust to your condition
- become confident to care for your health and return to former activities
- reduce the risks of further heart problems
- enjoy life more.

Almost everyone with heart problems can benefit from some kind of cardiac rehabilitation. No one is too old or too young. Women can benefit from cardiac rehabilitation as much as men.

When you have heart disease, breaking old habits and learning new ones can be difficult. Wondering about your future health can be worrying too. The support of family and friends, as well as health care providers, can make a big difference to how well you adjust to these changes. Share this booklet with others so they will learn about cardiac rehabilitation and how they can help you.

## THE CARDIAC REHABILITATION TEAM

Cardiac rehabilitation services can involve many people. Your team may be made up of one or more of the following people:

- Doctors (your family doctor, a heart specialist, perhaps a surgeon)
- Nurses
- Exercise specialists
- Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists
- Dietitians
- Social Workers
- Psychologists
- Pharmacists
- Your family.

In many public hospitals trained interpreters are available. If you have difficulty communicating in English, ask if an interpreter can be booked for your next appointment. Sometimes your family doctor works alone, playing many roles, or may refer you to other health care specialists as needed.

The most important member of your cardiac rehabilitation team is **you**. No one else can make you exercise, or quit smoking, or eat a more healthy diet.

## HOW DO I GET STARTED?

Cardiac rehabilitation often begins in the hospital after a heart attack, heart surgery, or other heart treatment. It may continue in an outpatient setting after you leave the hospital. Once you learn the habits of heart-healthy living, stick with them for life.

- **In hospital.** In hospital you can tell your doctor or nurse that you are interested in cardiac rehabilitation, and ask where you can enrol in a program.
- **Post-hospital.** Cardiac rehabilitation may be located at the hospital, in a medical or professional centre, or in a community facility, such as a community health centre or fitness centre. You may even have a cardiac rehabilitation program that you do at home. The type of programs available will be different from place to place. You will be advised about the amount of physical activity you should do. You will also receive education and encouragement to control any risk factors you might have for heart disease. For example, you will be given information on how to eat and cook foods that are good for your heart, and how to QUIT if you are a smoker. You can call the Heart Foundation Heartline on 1300 36 27 87 for details of available services. If you need help making phone calls in English, ring the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131450.
- **For life.** After you have learned the skills of heart healthy living, you should aim to continue to use them for life.

## HOW CAN CARDIAC REHABILITATION HELP ME?

Cardiac rehabilitation has two major parts:

1. **Physical activity** to help you learn how to be active safely, strengthen your muscles and improve your stamina. Your physical activity plan will be based on your individual ability, needs and interests.
2. **Education and counselling** to help you understand and adjust to your heart condition and find ways to reduce your risk of future heart problems. The cardiac rehabilitation program will help you regain your confidence and deal with your reactions and fears, as well as setting goals for future activities.

Cardiac rehabilitation often takes place in groups. This can be a valuable support for you. However, each patient's plan is based on his or her specific risk factors and special needs. These will also influence the length of your program.

*No matter how difficult it seems, your hard work in cardiac rehabilitation will have lifetime benefits*

## **IS IT SAFE FOR ME?**

Cardiac rehabilitation is safe. Research shows that serious health problems caused by cardiac rehabilitation exercise are rare. Your cardiac rehabilitation team will recommend types of activities that are suitable for you.

Checking how your heart reacts and adapts to physical activity is an important part of cardiac rehabilitation. You can learn how to estimate how hard you are exercising or how to check your own pulse rate.

## **WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?**

The goals of cardiac rehabilitation are different for each patient. To help you to set your personal goals, your cardiac rehabilitation team will look at your general health, your personal heart problem, your risks for future heart problems, your doctor's recommendations, and, of course, your own preferences.

Cardiac rehabilitation may reduce your symptoms and your chances of having more heart problems. It has many other benefits:

- Exercise tones your muscles and improves your energy levels and spirits. It helps both your heart and your body to be stronger and to work better.
- Cardiac rehabilitation may also get you back to work and other activities faster.
- A healthy diet may lower blood cholesterol, control weight, and help prevent or control high blood pressure and other problems such as diabetes. Plus, you will feel better and have more energy.
- Cardiac rehabilitation may help you quit smoking. Giving up smoking means less risk of lung cancer, emphysema and bronchitis, as well as less risk of heart at-

tack, stroke, and other heart and blood vessel problems. It means more energy, and it means better health for your loved ones.

- Cardiac rehabilitation may help you psychologically and emotionally. It can improve your confidence and help you plan and deal with any uncertainty and fears about the future.

### **TYPES OF EXERCISE**

*Aerobic exercise raises your pulse rate and makes you perspire. It helps improve the flow of oxygenated blood throughout your body. There are different kinds of aerobic exercise, including walking and swimming.*

*Strength training, such as using weights, improves your muscle strength and your stamina.*

***In many cases the team will recommend both types of exercise.***

***Other useful exercises may include dancing, tai chi, or other activities that you like to do.***

Make a habit of the heart-healthy lifestyle you learn in cardiac rehabilitation. Your life depends on it!

## **RISK FACTORS FOR CORONARY HEART DISEASE**

The controllable risk factors for coronary heart disease are listed below. There are some risk factors that you cannot change, such as older age or a family history of heart disease. You **can** change or control the ones listed below. Cardiac rehabilitation can help you do this.

## CORONARY HEART DISEASE RISK FACTORS YOU CAN CONTROL

- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High blood cholesterol
- Inactive lifestyle
- Overweight
- Diabetes

## HOW CAN I GET THE MOST OUT OF CARDIAC REHABILITATION?

Research shows that controlling your risk factors for heart disease can help you lead a healthier life. So make sure your cardiac rehabilitation plan works for you. To gain more control over your cardiac rehabilitation remember your goals.

- **Plan your program.** Work with your cardiac rehabilitation team or your doctor or community nurse to design a program to meet your needs.
- **Communicate.** Ask questions. If you don't understand the answers, keep asking until you do. Report changes in your feelings or symptoms.
- **Take charge of your recovery.** No one else can do it for you. Your new lifestyle is healthy for your heart, so stick with it – for life.

You may want to have a special diary or calendar just for your rehabilitation. Keep important information, such as appointment times, telephone numbers, etc, where you can find it.

*If you feel you may be melancholy or depressed, tell your doctor. Sometimes people who have big changes in their lives feel depressed.*

*Some people with heart problems feel sad or depressed when they find out about their disease or after heart surgery. Cardiac rehabilitation may help you feel better, but if you are seriously depressed, it is hard to do things to help yourself get better, such as going to cardiac rehabilitation or getting back to your usual activities.*

*Depression can be treated: ask your doctor*

To be an active member of your cardiac rehabilitation team:

- Learn about your heart condition.
- Learn what you can do to help your heart.
- Follow the treatment plan.
- Feel free to ask questions.
- Report symptoms or problems.

*A support network can help you. Your support network may be family, friends, or a group of other people with heart problems*

Family members and friends can make a difference. They may want to learn more about heart problems so their help can be even more valuable. For example, family members may have to learn to let you do things for yourself, or they may want to learn about preparing heart healthy meals. Your family and friends can give you emotional support as you adjust to a new, healthier lifestyle.

You may also want the support of other people who have heart disease. Ask your cardiac rehabilitation team if they know of a support group that you and your family or carer can join, or get in touch with one of the organisations listed here.

## WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION AND SUPPORT?

For additional information about heart disease and ways you can help yourself through cardiac rehabilitation call the following people.

If you need help making phone calls in English, ring the Translating and Interpreting Service on 131450.

### **Heart Foundation Heartline**

Ph: 1300 36 27 87

### **Heart Foundation**

407 Elizabeth Street, Level 4

SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

Ph: 02 9219 2444

Fax: 02 9219 2424

### **Your Local Hospital**

Name: .....

**Ph:** .....

**Fax:** .....

### **Your Family Doctor**

Name: .....

Ph: .....

Fax: .....

### **Your Cardiac Rehabilitation Coordinator**

Name: .....

Ph: .....

Fax: .....

## **PATIENT SUPPORT GROUPS**

### ***ARABIC: Arabic Speaking Cardiac Education Group***

**Liverpool area, Sydney**

Contact: 9828 3000

### ***ARABIC: Arabic Women's Walking Group***

**Bankstown area, Sydney**

Contact: 9722 8000

### ***ASSYRIAN: Assyrian Walking Group***

**Fairfield area, Sydney**

Contact: Anees Talia 9794 1700 (Fairfield Health Service)

### ***GREEK: Greek Walking Group***

**Fairfield area, Sydney**

Contact: Fairfield Health Service 9728 7233

### ***ITALIAN: Amici del Cuore ('Friends of the Heart')***

**Concord area, Sydney**

Contact: Antonio Famularo

10 Melaleuca Grove

GREENACRE NSW 2190

Ph: 02 9642 7933

Fax: 02 9746 7067

### ***SPANISH: Spanish Speaking Diabetic Association of Australia Inc***

**Liverpool area, Sydney**

Contact: 9607 8427

### ***VIETNAMESE: Vietnamese Elderly Friendship Association***

***Walking for Pleasure Group***

**Fairfield area, Sydney**

Contact: 9735 7459 or Anh Tran 9794 1700 (Fairfield Health Service)

### **Fairfield Area, Sydney: Diet/Nutrition Groups**

A variety of nutritional / diet information sessions are held in Assyrian, Croatian, Khmer, Lao, Macedonian, Serbian, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Contact: Fairfield Health Service 9728 7233.

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### ***Heart Support Australia***

*(Branches in all States, including country areas, children and teenage sub-groups)*

Ph: 02 6285 2357

Fax: 02 6281 1120

### ***The Open Heart Association***

*(Branches in Northern Sydney, Western Sydney and Newcastle/Nelson Bay)*

Ph: 02 9817 5425

### ***Hawkesbury Cardiac Support Group***

Ph: 02 4578 3355

### ***Nepean/Blue Mountains Cardiac Support Group***

Ph: 02 4736 5018

### ***Western Districts Cardiac Support Group (Pennant Hills area)***

Ph: 02 9871 4025

### ***ICD Support Group (for those with implantable defibrillators)***

Westmead Hospital

Coordinator: Jill Squire, Clinical Nurse Consultant

Ph: 02 9845 5555 page 01124

For details of support groups in other States call the Heart Foundation in the relevant State.

## **Health Care Complaints**

Patient Support Office

Level 4, 28 – 36 Foveaux Street

SURRY HILLS NSW 2010

Locked Mail Bag 18

STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012

This information is based on the ***NSW Policy Standards for Cardiac Rehabilitation***.

These Standards were developed by a panel of experts under the auspices of the NSW Health Department.

Panel members represented a broad body of professional and consumer expertise in cardiovascular health.

The Policy Standards are available on the NSW Health Department Website at: <http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/public-health/cardiac/cardpol.html>

Telephone numbers are correct at time of publication but are not continually updated. You may need to check the numbers in the telephone directory.