

Discharge Information: Heart Attack



You were treated in the hospital for a heart attack (myocardial infarction). Blood flow to part of your heart muscle was cut off for a period of time.

This handout tells you and your caregiver what you need to know about your care in the first weeks at home. Ask your doctor or nurse if there are things you do not understand.

Follow-Up Appointments

| Name of Doctor | Date & Time | Phone Number |
|----------------|-------------|--------------|
| 1. | | |
| 2. | | |
| 3. | | |



Eating Plan

Follow a heart healthy eating plan.

- Eat plenty of fruits and vegetables.
- Get 50% to 60% of your calories from carbohydrates, such as bread, cereals, rice, and potatoes.
- Get 15% of your calories from protein, such as chicken (no skin), fish, beans, tofu, and nuts.
- Get 25% to 35% of your calories from healthy fats, such as walnuts, pumpkin seeds, and fatty fish (like salmon and tuna). They are also in olive, canola, and peanut oils.
- Less than 7% of your calories should come from saturated fats, such as fatty meat (like bacon and sausage), whole milk dairy products (like cheese, ice cream, and butter), and hydrogenated oils (like palm and coconut).
- Limit the amount of salt (sodium) you eat.

Lose weight if you need to. Ask your doctor about a weight loss plan that is good for you.

Cut down on the amount of caffeine you get. Caffeine is in many soft drinks, energy drinks, coffee, tea, and chocolate.



Activity

Increase your activities slowly. Take rest breaks when you work or are active.

Change position slowly.

- Go from lying down to sitting, then sitting to standing.
- When getting out of bed, briefly sit on the edge of the bed before standing up.

Stop your activity if you have chest pain.

Set a goal of 30 to 60 minutes of exercise 5 to 7 days a week. Talk to your doctor before starting to exercise if you have not been active recently.

Talk with your doctor about when you can have sex.

Take it easy when doing activities that bring on chest pain (angina).

- Hard physical work, like raking leaves or shoveling snow
- Sexual activity
- Working in very hot or very cold temperatures
- Activity when you first get up in the morning

Talk to your doctor about taking part in a cardiac rehabilitation program.

Do not drive or return to work until your doctor says it is OK.



Self-Care

Keep all doctor appointments.

If you feel pain or tightness in your chest:

- Stop what you are doing. Rest for a few minutes.
- If the pain does not ease up, take your nitroglycerin medicine the way your doctor told you.
- Talk to your doctor if you have symptoms more often, or if they get stronger or last longer.
- Have a plan so you know how to get help right away in case of a medical emergency.

Check your heart rate every day.

- Sit quietly for 10 minutes before you start.
- Place 2 fingers lightly on the artery on the inside of your wrist. Do not use your thumb.
- Using a clock or watch with a second hand, count the beats you feel for 60 seconds.
- Write down your heart rate in a diary to show your doctor.

Make changes to help keep your blood pressure in control.

- Check your blood pressure every day.
 - Wait 30 minutes after exercise before you take your blood pressure.
 - Take your blood pressure in the same arm each time.
 - Write down your blood pressure reading in a diary to show your doctor.
- Take your medicine.
- Be at a healthy weight.

Avoid things that make chest pain worse, such as tobacco, caffeine, and drugs that make your heart beat fast (cocaine, speed).

If you smoke, you should stop now. Talk to your doctor about ways to help you quit.



Medicine

When you leave the hospital, you should get:

- A list of all the medicines you should take
- Prescriptions for any new medicines

Take your medicine as your doctor asked you to.

- Talk to your doctor before you stop taking a medicine.
- Keep a list of all the medicines you take. Include your prescription medicines, and vitamins, herbs, and medicines you buy at the store.
- Take the medicine list to every doctor or hospital visit.
- Get the follow-up tests that your doctor orders.

Do not take medicines for erectile dysfunction if you take nitroglycerin.

These programs help you pay for prescription medicines if you cannot afford them.

- NeedyMeds. Go to: www.needymeds.org
- Partnership for Prescription Assistance. Go to: www.pparx.org or call 1.888.477.2669.



When to Call for Emergency Help

You show signs of heart or blood vessel problems.

- You have sudden chest pain that moves to your jaw, arms, or between your shoulder blades.
- You feel stabbing, squeezing, or tightness in your chest.
- There is a heavy feeling in your chest as if someone is sitting on you.
- Your chest pain does not go away when you rest or take chest pain medicine.
- You feel like you are choking or cannot get air.
- Your lips, nose area, or nails turn blue or gray.
- Your heart feels like it is beating hard, or your heartbeat is not regular.
- You have numbness or tingling in one or both arms.

You have signs of a possible stroke.

- Numbness, weakness, or problems moving on one side of the body
- Trouble speaking, slurred speech, or speech that does not make sense
- A sudden very bad headache with no known cause

You have fainting spells.



When to Call Your Regular Doctor

You have pain and swelling in your feet, calves, or legs.

You gain or lose weight and you do not know why.

You have other medical problems.



Learn More

- American Heart Association. Go to: www.heart.org
- National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute - National Institutes of Health.
Go to: www.nhlbi.nih.gov
- National Institutes of Health. Go to: www.smokefree.gov

This information is general in nature and may not apply to you or your condition. Talk to your doctor or nurse about how to best use this information and how to take care of your medical condition. Be sure to ask your doctor or nurse any questions you might have. This information sheet is not intended to provide or replace professional medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment.

Signatures

Patient or Caregiver

Signature

Date

Nurse

Signature

Date

