

CARDIAC REHABILITATION

What is Cardiac Rehab?

Cardiac rehabilitation (cardiac rehab) is a professionally supervised program to help people recover from heart attacks, heart surgery and percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) procedures such as stenting and angioplasty. Cardiac rehab programs usually provide education and counseling services to help heart patients increase physical fitness, reduce cardiac symptoms, improve health and reduce the risk of future heart problems, including heart attack.

Who Needs Cardiac Rehab?

Many people of all ages who have heart conditions can benefit from a cardiac rehab program. You may benefit if you have or have had a:

- Heart attack
- Heart condition, such as coronary artery disease (CAD), angina or heart failure
- Heart procedure or surgery, including coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery, percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), including coronary angioplasty (balloon angioplasty) and stenting, valve replacement, or a pacemaker or implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD)
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What Kinds of Services to Programs Offer?

Programs often include:

- A medical evaluation to figure out your needs and limitations. The medical staff uses this information to tailor a rehabilitation program for you and help you set goals.
- A physical activity program tailored to your needs. Training often starts in a group setting where your heart rate and blood pressure are monitored during physical activity. You may work with a physical therapist, exercise physiologist or other healthcare professional. You learn how to check your heart rate and your level (intensity) of activity. Later, you work up to more intense aerobic activity on a treadmill or exercise bike.
- Counseling and education to help you understand your condition and how to manage it. You may work with a dietitian to create a healthy eating plan. If you smoke, you may get counseling on how to stop. Counseling may also help you cope with depression, anger and stress during your recovery.
- Support and training to help you return to work or your normal activities and to help you learn to manage your heart condition.

How Long Do People Attend Cardiac Rehab Programs?

Your rehabilitation plan is designed to meet your needs. You may need six weeks, six months or longer to learn how to manage your condition and develop healthier habits. Many programs last only three months, but some continue for years

What are the Benefits of Attending a Supervised Cardiac Rehab Program?

- Regular physical activity helps your heart and the rest of your body get stronger and work better. Physical activity improves your energy level and lifts your spirits. It also reduces your chances of future heart problems, including heart attack.

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- Counseling and education can help you quit smoking, eat right, lose weight, and lower your blood pressure and cholesterol levels. Counseling may also help you learn to manage stress and to feel better about your health.
- You have the advice and close supervision of healthcare professionals to help you improve your health and lower your risk of future problems. These professionals can also communicate with your primary care doctor or cardiologist.

How Can I Find Out About Programs in my Community?

Your doctor may refer you to a program or you can ask your doctor or nurse for a recommendation. Hospitals often offer cardiac rehabilitation programs. So do some community groups, such as your local senior or civic centers. Cardiac rehab is often covered by health plans and Medicare for the first two or three months.

What Should I Consider When Choosing a Program?

- Time: Is the program offered at a time you can be there?
- Place: Is the program easy to get to?
- Services: Does the program offer the services you need?
- Setting: Is it a group or individual program? Is it in a facility or will you do most of your physical activity at home?
- Cost: Can you afford it? Is it covered by your health plan or Medicare?