Cardiac Rehabilitation: Your Exercise Prescription

Cardiac rehabilitation is a program designed specifically for you to improve the health of your heart. When you begin cardiac rehab, your cardiac care team will evaluate your level of fitness and develop an exercise program just for you.

This exercise plan is a prescription to improve your heart health, based on your medical history, your exercise test or stress test, if you had one, and your risk level. And just like you would follow a prescription for medicine, your exercise prescription is important for your health and should be followed.

> *"So we started cardiac rehab very fast, and that was emotionally and psychologically very uplifting, because now I'm doing things that I was doing before. I was able to ride a bike. I was on a treadmill. I was on an elliptical. So that did wonders for me emotionally and psychologically."* – Kersey, Patient

An exercise prescription states what type of exercise you should do, how often, and for how long. For example, you may be told to do aerobic exercise for 30 minutes, 3 times a week.

Your exercise prescription usually also includes a target heart rate. Target heart rate refers to how many times your heart should be beating per minute when you exercise, in order to get the most benefit while keeping your heart in a safe working range.

Please remember, your cardiac rehab program is designed specifically for you so your exercise prescription may be different from someone else's. Follow your own prescription to improve your heart health.

When you are prescribed aerobic exercise, choose an activity you enjoy to keep you moving. Examples of aerobic exercise include walking, cycling, and swimming. All of these exercises use large muscle groups, such as your arms and legs, and can be done continuously.

Aerobic exercise is the best way to improve your cardiovascular fitness. It can help decrease symptoms, lower your blood pressure, improve your cholesterol levels, help you lose weight, control diabetes, increase energy, and manage stress.

Weight training or resistance training is another type of exercise that may be part of your exercise prescription. These exercises help to increase muscle mass. Stronger muscles make it easier for you to carry out your daily activities and help you maintain a healthy body weight. Not everyone should lift weights, ask your cardiac care team how to get the benefits of resistance exercise safely.

And finally, your exercise prescription may include flexibility exercises, or stretching. This is often combined with your exercise sessions as part of your cool down. Flexibility exercises have many benefits for your health, including stress relief. As you stretch, remember to breathe deeply and relax. Use this time to benefit physically as well as

emotionally from your exercise prescription.

> *"Stretching is very important because it has a host of benefits for the body. The first thing is it helps to warm you up, get the blood circulating. It's also good for posture. But if you've recovered from an injury or a procedure it helps with mobility and the joints before you start the actual exercise."*
> – Gabriella, Fitness Instructor

At any stage of cardiac rehabilitation, your cardiac rehab team may decide to change your prescription. As you get more physically fit, your body may need to be challenged further. This is a good thing. Gradually increase your exercise duration and intensity to keep working your heart.

> *"You start off slowly, and you work your way up. As you go more times, they increase the amount of physical activity."* – Gordon, Patient

Remember, your cardiac rehab team is there to support you along the way. Talk to your healthcare team about your exercise prescription to make sure you are working out at the best level for your heart. Ask them about what exercises you can do when you are at home.

Exercise can be as powerful as any medication when it comes to heart health. Follow your exercise prescription to improve your heart and reduce your risk of a heart event in the future.