

# Heart Surgery: Reducing Your Heart Disease Risk Factors after Heart Surgery

Your heart surgery may have fixed your heart, but it did not cure your Coronary Artery Disease. Following heart surgery, your goal is to protect the long-term health of your heart.

Start by reducing your risk factors, the things that can increase the damage to your heart. There are some risk factors you can't change, but there are some you can. Risk factors you can work to change include: Unhealthy cholesterol levels, Smoking and Second-Hand Smoke, High blood pressure, an inactive lifestyle, being overweight, Diabetes, and stress.

If you have not done so already, work with your cardiac care team to determine which risk factors you need to improve.

*"We will look at what their risk factors are for heart disease and set goals for that patient with the patient uh on what lifestyle changes they need to make."*

Many controllable risk factors can be improved by making lifestyle changes.

*"So, in the long run what we do here in the hospital helps people acutely become better and sort of survive. However long-term people need to make lifestyle modifications with diet and exercise and take the proper medications on a routine basis to help what we do here last a lifetime."*

If you are overweight take steps to lose weight by making healthier food choices and getting physically active. If you smoke, quit. Control your blood pressure and cholesterol by making healthier food choices and taking any prescribed medications. If you have Diabetes, follow your management plan to maintain a healthy glucose level. And find ways to reduce stress in your life.

*"Well when I was discharged, I was put on a low fat, low sodium diet. I really had to be more aware of sodium and like pre-packaged foods."*

*"Of course, right after surgery, uhm. I felt tired, but I felt more rested every day when I woke up. There's no doubt in my mind uh, my physical feelings throughout the day are much more positive than they were prior to surgery."*

Making lifestyle changes can be difficult, especially at first. Start slowly and take one day at a time. Every little success is good for your heart. If you do have a set-back, don't get discouraged. Stay committed to making changes for your long-term heart health.

Attending Cardiac Rehabilitation can help you develop the skills you need to properly care for your heart for the long-term. It is also a great place to work and share with others making similar changes.

*"Yeah, at- at Cardiac Rehab, uh these people in your similar situation as you, I mean, you're making new friends with them because uh you uh you have a lot of similarities involved, uh you know, in this- in this project."*

*"When Cardiac Rehab is over, the exercising is not over. I'm going to continue and for the rest of my life hopefully."*

Reducing your heart disease risk factors will help you maintain your heart health and may lessen the chance of further health problems in the future.