

After a Heart Attack: Discharge Day

You will be discharged from the hospital after your heart attack.

Before you leave, you will be given discharge instructions from your healthcare team.

Discharge instructions are specifically written for you and include a lot of information to help you heal while at home, such as information on the medicines you will be taking.

It will also include information on how to be an active member in your own care team, whether that means taking care of an incision site or making lifestyle changes, like quitting smoking, to reduce your risk of future heart attacks.

It's very important to fully understand and follow your discharge instructions. If you don't understand something, or have questions about your insurance, make sure to ask your healthcare provider.

After you get home, and for the next few days, make sure to get plenty of rest and don't push yourself too hard.

It may take several weeks or even months before you can return to normal activity levels, so plan on being patient with yourself.

If you are prescribed new medicines, it's important to get all your prescriptions filled as soon as possible and create a plan to take your medicines as directed.

A simple pill box is a great tool to help organize your medicines.

And it can be helpful to fill out a medicine tracker, such as the one from the American Heart Association, as well.

Your discharge instructions might also include recommendations on lifting heavy objects and, if you had surgery, when you can shower again.

Your healthcare provider may recommend you attend a Cardiac Rehabilitation program.

Cardiac rehab is a program that includes supervised exercise, education for heart healthy living and counseling to reduce stress.

"Physically and mentally. It gives you a little security blanket."

Talk with your healthcare provider for more information about Cardiac Rehab.

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When you are home again, it's not uncommon to have strong feelings about your heart attack. It's normal to feel anxious and sad. But be aware of depression.

Look out for symptoms of depression such as: feelings of hopelessness or sadness that don't go away; Harmful thoughts; changes in sleep patterns; and changes in appetite.

Reach out to your healthcare provider for help. Depression can be treated.

Support groups can also be an excellent resource. Your healthcare team may be able to recommend local support groups or visit heart.org/supportnetwork to learn more.

You should also learn to recognize the signs and symptoms of heart disease or another heart attack.

This can include sharp pains, trouble breathing, dizziness, irregular heartbeat, or pressure in the chest. Be aware of a return of your heart attack symptoms.

If you think you may be experiencing another heart attack, call 911 immediately and take any emergency medicine you have been prescribed.

Your discharge instructions will also recommend ways you can lower your risk of a future heart attack.

Talk to your healthcare provider about strategies to live a healthy lifestyle. You can make a big difference in your overall health and heart disease risk when you make positive lifestyle changes.

Finally, your healthcare provider will want to see you again 1 or 2 weeks after discharge.

It's a good idea to make your follow-up appointments early and always make sure to keep your appointments.

Discharge day is a big day. You're ready to go home and take control of your recovery. Before you are discharged, make sure to ask your healthcare provider any questions you have.

Once you're home, follow your discharge plan closely: get plenty of rest, take your medicines, attend cardiac rehab, recognize your emotions, and know the symptoms of another heart attack.

Give yourself plenty of time to heal.