

# Healthy Living After a Heart Attack: Exercise

A heart attack is a major event that can affect every part of your life, including your ability to exercise and be active.

It's very normal after a heart attack to be worried about how much exercise is safe and how much physical activity you should be getting.

That's why it is important to talk to your cardiac care team before you leave the hospital—to find out about any restrictions you may have on your activities while you recover at home.

When you first get home, rest. Your body is healing. Don't overdo it.

Get a good night's sleep, every night.

Pace your activities. If you feel tired during the day, take a nap or rest. You may be surprised at how quickly you can tire out. Listen to your body and let it heal.

If there are stairs in your home, you can conserve your energy by taking fewer trips up and down each day.

If you get tired while climbing the stairs, rest on a step or landing. Wait until you're ready to walk the rest of the way up.

As you recover, some activities may be restricted for the first couple of weeks or until your follow-up appointment.

Depending on the work you do, you might not be able to go back to work right away.

Your cardiac care team can help you determine when you can safely return to work, and when it's safe for you to drive a car.

*"You seem strong. And I think you can go back to work now, get back on the horse and resume a great life."*

You may also be referred for a cardiac rehabilitation program.

Cardiac Rehabilitation, or cardiac rehab, is a type of supervised exercise program that can help your recovery. Your Cardiac Care team will let you know when it's ok to start your rehab program. If you have not already signed up for Cardiac Rehab, talk to your Cardiac Care team to get signed up today.

*"The thing about cardiac rehab is that it really not only strengthens the heart, but it also strengthens the mind in their abilities to be able to do the things that they need to do."*

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Heavy lifting, pushing and pulling heavy objects, lawn care, and some sports may be restricted. Ask your cardiac care team when you will be able to start doing these things again.

Talk to your healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about sexual activity or medicine you are taking for sexual function.

You may resume sexual activity when you feel ready, unless your cardiac care team tells you otherwise.

Generally speaking – the energy needed for sex is about the same as climbing 2 flights of stairs or walking ½ mile at a brisk pace.

Being physically active is important to your recovery from a heart attack, but for now make sure you don't overdo it.

Follow the instructions about what you can and can't do in the first few weeks, including any instructions regarding care for a surgical incision.

This can affect the type and how much physical activity is safe for you.

When you are ready to be more physically active, talk to your cardiac care team. They can give you the confidence that you, and your heart, need.