



Cardiac Rehabilitation

Your quick guide



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Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer.

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.

But so many people still need our help. From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of living with heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

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What is cardiac rehab?

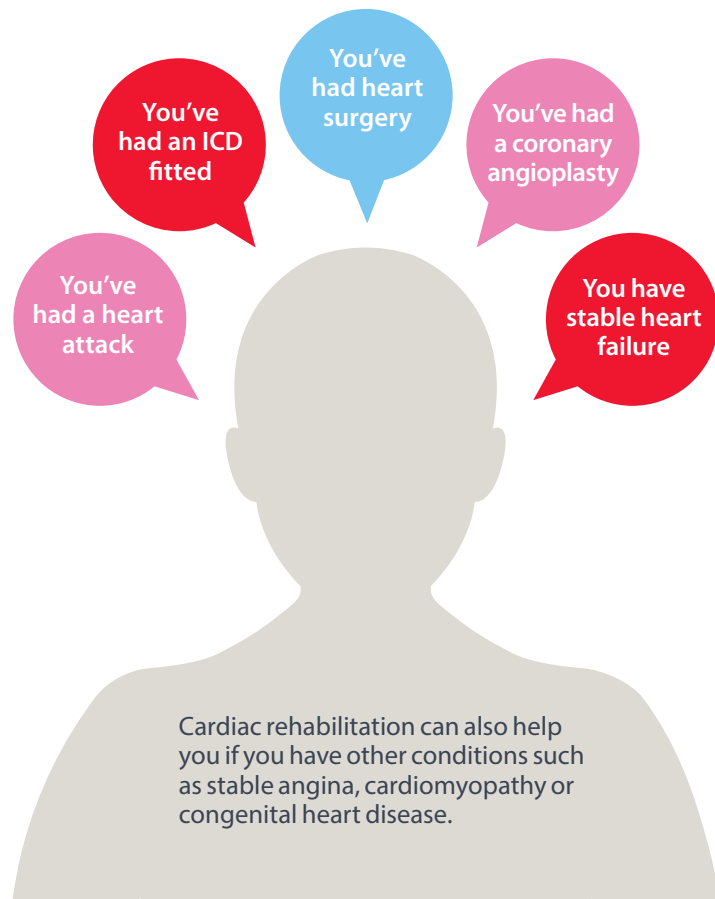
Cardiac rehabilitation – or cardiac rehab – is a programme of education and exercise sessions.

If you've had a cardiac event such as a heart attack or if you've had treatment like a coronary angioplasty, cardiac rehab aims to help you recover and get back to living your life as fully as possible.



Who is cardiac rehab for?

Cardiac rehab can be helpful if:





When should I start cardiac rehabilitation?

In many hospitals, a member of the cardiac rehabilitation team will come and see you while you are on the ward to give you information about your condition and about the treatment you have had. They can talk to you about your recovery and getting back to your usual activities and about your lifestyle and how you can protect your heart in the future. It's good to include your partner or a member of your family in these conversations if you can.

Your road to recovery



Leaving hospital

Your cardiac rehab programme usually starts four to eight weeks after you leave hospital.



What will my first weeks at home be like?

It's normal to worry or feel anxious when you leave hospital. Make sure you find out what you are allowed to do. Everyone is different so you must get advice which is right for you.

Different people recover at very different speeds – your recovery time will depend on your age, your heart condition and the treatment you had.

In the first few weeks, you are likely to have good days and bad days. But as time goes by, you should improve steadily and gradually feel better.



Some cardiac rehabilitation teams can offer you support in these first few weeks. One of the team members may visit you at home or phone you to see how you are. Or they may tell you about a helpline service to call for advice or information.

It's also a good idea to see your GP soon after you leave hospital. When you visit your GP, you can ask about any concerns you have.



What happens on a cardiac rehabilitation programme?

Cardiac rehab programmes are very different across the country, but they usually include a mix of exercise, education, relaxation and psychological support.

1

Exercise

Exercise can help your recovery and improve your fitness, strength and general wellbeing.

Before you start your programme, you will have an assessment to find out how much exercise you can safely do.

A nurse, physiotherapist or an exercise specialist can then work out a programme of exercises for you, tailoring the programme to your particular needs.

At first, it may seem very tiring, but this is normal and you'll feel less tired as your strength and confidence return.

If your heart disease limits what you can do or if you have another condition that affects your movement – such as arthritis – you may not be able to do the exercise sessions. If you can't, you can still benefit from the other parts of the cardiac rehab programme.



Leo's story

Leo was 47 when he had a heart attack followed by triple bypass surgery. While he was in hospital he was offered a place on a cardiac rehab programme.

"I gave up smoking, and started to think more about what I was eating. We eat a lot more fish and vegetables now. It's had a good effect on the whole family!

It's good to check in each week and feel part of the community."



“I definitely feel much better in myself. I’m more in control of my own health than I ever was before.”

Leo, took control

2

Education

Your cardiac rehab programme may include information or education sessions on particular topics. An example is sessions on the risk factors for coronary heart disease – things like high levels of blood cholesterol. The aim is to help you make healthy lifestyle choices which may help reduce your risk of further heart problems.

Topics covered can include

Treatments

Treatments for heart conditions, including surgery, coronary angioplasty and medicines. You will also learn how to manage your condition in the long term.



Risk factors

The risk factors for coronary heart disease – such as smoking, high blood cholesterol and high blood pressure – and what you can do about them to help reduce your risk.



Who is in the cardiac rehabilitation team?

The team may include a cardiologist, specialist cardiac nurse, physiotherapist, exercise specialist, occupational therapist, dietitian and psychologist. You may not get to see all of these professionals, but you may see some of them either while you are in hospital or afterwards as an outpatient.



Healthy lifestyles

Eating a healthy, balanced diet and regular physical activity helps to keep your heart healthy and can reduce the risk of having further heart problems.



Practical issues

The practical issues you might need to consider, such as driving, returning to work and going on holiday.



3

Relaxation and psychological support

Some cardiac rehab programmes teach you different relaxation techniques so you can find one that suits you. You'll also find out how important relaxation is in helping to manage stress. Some programmes may offer one-to-one counselling or advice to people who need it.



What should I do after the programme?

After you have finished your cardiac rehab programme, it's vital to carry on with regular exercise and to lead a healthy lifestyle in the long term. Doing this will help protect your heart and reduce your risk of further heart problems.

