Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme
An information guide
Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme

If you have had a heart attack or heart surgery, cardiac rehabilitation provides you and your family with the information, support and advice you need.

The aim of cardiac rehabilitation is for you to recover and to resume as full a life as possible after a heart event. It aims to help you:

• to understand your condition
• to recover from your surgery or heart attack
• to make changes to your lifestyle which will help to improve the health of your heart
• to reduce the risk of another heart attack
• to increase your confidence.

Who is it for?
Cardiac rehabilitation is available for anyone who’s had:

• acute coronary syndrome including heart attack
• coronary artery angioplasty, including a stent
• heart surgery

Cardiac rehabilitation programmes can also help some people who have angina or have heart failure.

If exercise is not suitable for you then this will be discussed with you.

Close friends or family are also welcome to come along.
When do I start cardiac rehabilitation?

Cardiac rehabilitation starts as soon as you go into hospital for your heart problem. A member of the cardiac rehabilitation team will normally visit you on the ward to give you information about your condition and the treatment you’ve had, as well as information about your recovery and how to get back to your usual activities.

You will be invited to join a cardiac rehabilitation programme, which starts approximately four to eight weeks after you leave hospital. This is a formal programme of exercise classes and education sessions. Staff will decide if the exercises are suitable for you.

This programme takes 6-8 weeks to achieve the full benefit, and at the end we will discuss with you how to continue with your progress.

Risks and benefits of the programme

Exercising in a professional programme is a safe environment in which to monitor your activity and gradually increase your exercise. We monitor you regularly to ensure that you are working within safe limits. You may be concerned about the risk of exercise and physical activity after your heart attack/illness or surgery, but regular exercise reduces the risk of further events.

Increasing exercise provided in this programme will get you fitter, so that you are able to do more physical activity and make the activities of daily living easier. You will be less tired, more likely to sleep better and to wake up feeling more refreshed.

Sometimes increasing your physical activity affects the effectiveness of your tablets, and sometimes a change in your tablets may affect how you can exercise, so it is important for you to monitor any changes in signs and symptoms and report to the cardiac rehabilitation staff. If there is any change to your
medication or advice from a hospital or GP visit – please tell the cardiac rehabilitation staff.

**General exercise advice following a heart event**

The programme includes exercise in the class setting and work at home plan.

**Exercise prescription**

Regular exercise has many benefits, and doing the class once a week is not enough. To get the most benefit within the 8 week programme, you need to walk alternate days and exercise alternate days or discuss alternatives with the cardiac rehabilitation staff. **This exercise programme is as important as any prescription.**

**Simple tips to increase your activity safely:**

- walk instead of using the car
- take the stairs instead of the lift
- look for ways of making exercise enjoyable-involve your family and friends, go for a walk before dinner each evening, find new places to explore. This way you are more likely to make exercise a way of life and incorporate it into your daily activities
- research findings indicate that it is desirable to exercise for 30-45 minutes 3-5 times a week to get the most benefit. This is better than a single two-hour walk
- always warm up before the active exercise programme
- always allow time for your body to cool down after any exercise
- wear sensible and comfortable clothing and footwear. Slip-on shoes; trailing scarves or tight clothes are not advised
- start any exercise slowly and gradually build up
• gradually return to exercise after an absence for any reason
• if you are diabetic, check your glucose levels before you attend the class. If you use Glyceryl Trinitrate (GTN) or a breathing inhaler, take it with you to the class
• do not exercise if you suffer from chest discomfort, undue shortness of breath, dizziness, palpitations, nausea, muscle cramps or muscle fatigue. If you suffer from any of these symptoms during the programme, please inform the rehabilitation staff
• do not exercise during an illness or infection (including the common cold). **Ring to cancel the class until you feel better**
• avoid exercise outdoors on very cold or windy days; if you need to go out wrap a scarf around your face so you breathe in warm air not cold. Also warm up first, by either doing some of the warm up exercises or walk around your home a bit before setting off
• avoid exercise in hot or humid weather. When doing physical activity take it more slowly, drink water and rest afterwards. For advice on travelling to hot countries ask for a leaflet or download from the British Heart Foundation (BHF) website
• it is important that you have your tablets and a light meal before you attend the rehabilitation class
• do not exercise for at least 1 hour after a meal, and do not exercise if you are very hungry. Do not drink alcohol before or after exercise. If you are fasting talk to the rehabilitation staff
• avoid holding your breath during exercise
• also avoid exercise (also called isometric exercise) that requires you to hold a muscle contraction for a long period
• avoid very hot baths or showers after exercise.
The Borg scale

This will be used throughout the programme and helps you to estimate how hard and strenuous the exercise feels to you. This depends on strain and fatigue in your muscles, feelings of breathlessness and aches in the chest. This is your perception, not what you believe you ought to feel.

How the scale works

6: nothing at all-sitting at rest
20 : Absolute maximum-pushing the body to its physical limit.

6 no exertion at all
7
7.5 extremely light
8
9 very light
10
11 light
12
13 somewhat hard
14
15 hard (heavy )
16
17 very hard
18
19 extremely hard
20 maximum exertion

Useful information

Stop Smoking
NHS smokefree national helpline 0300 123 1044
Local smoking cessation numbers:
Rochdale, Heywood and Middleton - 01706 751190
Bury - 0845 223 9001
Oldham - 0800 288 9008
In Greater Manchester contact your GP receptionist for further information.

Diabetes UK
Diabetes care line - 0345 123 2399
www.diabetes.org.uk

NHS Choices
Helpline 0845 606 4647
www.nhs.uk

British Heart Foundation
helpine 0300 330 3311 or email hearthelpline@bhf.org.uk
www.bhf.org.uk

DVLA
DVLA drivers medical enquiries - 0300 790 6806
If English is not your first language and you need help, please contact the Ethnic Health Team on 0161 627 8770

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