

Cardiac Rehabilitation

The next step in your heart recovery

Your cardiac team suggests that you exercise regularly as part of your recovery. Cardiac rehabilitation (cardiac rehab) is the next step in returning to a more active lifestyle. You will participate in cardiac rehab phase I while you are in the hospital. When you leave the hospital, your doctor will refer you to outpatient cardiac rehab phase II to continue your recovery. This handout provides information about what to expect from cardiac rehab.

Why should I consider cardiac rehabilitation?

Cardiac rehabilitation is a program that includes exercise and education for patients who are recovering from heart surgery or other heart conditions. Cardiac rehab is recommended by the Regional Heart Center at University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC) and by the American Heart Association.

These recommendations are based on studies that show the benefits of attending cardiac rehab. These benefits may include a longer life and a reduced risk of having a future heart event.

What is cardiac rehabilitation?

Cardiac rehabilitation is an extensive program that is supervised and taught by a team of health care providers.

Cardiac rehab includes:

- Exercise training
- Learning about physical activity
- Learning about managing blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, and diabetes
- Counseling on food choices, tobacco cessation, and managing stress



Cardiac rehabilitation provides exercise training and education in physical activity.



Cardiac rehabilitation will help you learn how to monitor and reduce your blood pressure and other cardiovascular risk factors.

Phases of Cardiac Rehab

Cardiac rehabilitation is divided into 3 phases:

Phase I

In phase I, your medical team in the hospital will:

- Teach you more about your cardiac condition(s)
- Suggest ways for you to reduce your risk factors
- Teach you to move safely, while following any restrictions that your doctor advises

The focus of phase I cardiac rehab is to help you get back to your normal living arrangements.

Phase II

Before you leave the hospital, your doctor will refer you to an outpatient cardiac rehabilitation program. Phase II usually consists of:

- Up to 12 weeks of ECG-monitored exercise
- Continued education about reducing your cardiovascular risk factors
- Resources to support your lifestyle changes

In phase II, you will:

- Exercise using a treadmill, stationary bike, rowing machine, or walking/jogging track
- Start slowly and follow a safe exercise program that will gradually help you get stronger
- Slowly move into a more intensive program that lets you work out longer and harder
- Have your heart rate, blood pressure, and ECG monitored by your health care providers
- Attend classes in reducing cardiac risk factors, healthy lifestyle changes, and nutrition

Phase III

Phase III is a continued outpatient exercise and education program. It provides exercise training with intermittent ECG monitoring. The goal is for you to progress to an exercise program you can do on your own. The length of this phase will depend on your needs and progress.

How do I qualify for outpatient cardiac rehab?

Patients who qualify for cardiac rehab have 1 or more of these conditions:

- Heart attack in the last 12 months
- Coronary bypass surgery
- Stable *angina pectoris* (chest pain)
- Heart valve repair or replacement
- *Angioplasty* or *coronary stenting* (procedures to improve blood flow in arteries)
- Heart transplant

Will my health insurance cover cardiac rehab?

Health insurance companies usually cover phase I and II cardiac rehabilitation for these conditions. Most people have to pay for phase III themselves. If you have questions, talk with your insurance company or with the staff of the cardiac rehabilitation program to find out what your insurance will cover.

What can cardiac rehab do for me?

Cardiac rehab can help you:

- Get stronger and healthier
- Learn to make healthy choices and develop a lifestyle that helps you live a longer, more enjoyable life
- Join a group for exercise and support as you make lifestyle changes

These are positive changes that can really make a difference for you and your family!

Questions?

Your questions are important. Your physical therapist will answer your questions about exercise during your therapy sessions in the hospital.

Call your doctor or health care provider if you have questions or concerns about your medical care.