



The Dudley Group
NHS Foundation Trust

Cardiac rehabilitation: risk factor management and secondary prevention

Cardiology Department

Patient Information Leaflet

10 top tips for going home

1. Rest when your body tells you.
2. Take all of your medications as prescribed and take them at the same time each day. Ensure that you have a good understanding of your medications.
3. Eat a balanced low fat, low salt, high fibre diet.
4. Do not drive for four weeks.
5. Commence your exercise regime as soon as you feel confident to do so.
6. Seek help with smoking cessation (if applicable).
7. Ensure your alcohol consumption is within the guidelines.
8. Educate yourself on your condition and heart health.
9. Contact your GP within two weeks of discharge to ensure that your prescription has been altered if needed.

Cardiac rehabilitation

We are the cardiac rehabilitation nurses and this leaflet has been written to provide information about your aftercare.

It is not intended to replace talking to the medical or nursing staff or asking questions.

What is cardiac rehabilitation?

It is a programme of education and exercise sessions. If you have had a cardiac event such as a heart attack, or if you have had treatment such as a coronary angioplasty, cardiac rehabilitation aims to help you recover and get back to living your life as fully as possible.

What are the benefits of a cardiac rehabilitation programme?

Cardiac rehabilitation is as much an essential part of your treatment as your medicines are.

Cardiac rehabilitation aims to:

- Give you the information and education you need whilst you recover.
- Look after your heart health and keep you well in the future.
- Help you to regain your confidence by knowing what you can do to help yourself and reduce your risk of further problems.
- Allow you to meet others who have been through similar experiences, which can be reassuring to you and your family.

What is involved with cardiac rehabilitation?

There are four phases of cardiac rehabilitation:

Phase one

This phase takes place whilst you are in hospital. This usually involves briefly speaking with a cardiac rehabilitation practitioner or a nurse on the ward. Staff will help you to identify any potential lifestyle changes you can make to help prevent further heart disease, resume an active lifestyle, and possibly return to work if this is appropriate for you.

Make sure you find out what you can do. Everyone is different, so you must get advice which is right for you.

Phase two

This phase occurs once you have returned home. A cardiac rehabilitation nurse will contact you by phone usually within four days of your discharge.

This will give you an opportunity to ask questions and discuss any concerns you may have. Subsequently, you will be invited to attend the next phase of cardiac rehabilitation.

Phase three

This phase is delivered by Action Heart at Russells Hall Hospital. They deliver a comprehensive cardiac rehabilitation programme which involves:

- An early introduction to education/information (including a seminar lecture series post discharge/repatriation).
- A counselling service for patients and carers.
- A functional assessment (typically maximal exercise testing).
- Stress management/psychological support as required.
- Supervised and/or independent exercise.
- Long term support (12 months).
- Routine functional and risk factor reassessments, including risk factor control with cardiac liaison nurses and links to the primary care coronary heart disease (CHD) register.
- Patient and carer involvement in peer support and buddying.
- Walking groups (green gym), fitness walking and the Action Heart running club.
- Outdoor gym facility.

Phase four

Following completion of phase three, you can attend your local leisure centre for community-based programmes. Contact details of these facilities can be given to you if you are interested.

Going home

The first few days

Everyone is different, so make sure that, before you go home from hospital, you have been given all the information you need, for example, what sort of activities are right for you. **For the first two or three days at home, it is best to take things easy.**

Rest is also important for your recovery. It is normal to feel tired after a heart attack. Make sure that you rest properly on your bed, rather than dozing in a chair.

Feelings

It is normal to have mixed emotions. You may feel anxious, low, bad-tempered, or weepy after being diagnosed with a heart problem. You may be worried about further heart problems or feel relieved that you have had treatment to help improve your heart condition. All of this is natural.

It is vital that you talk about your feelings with your family, friends or the cardiac rehabilitation team, especially if you continue to feel low or depressed.

Housework and gardening

You can start doing light work in the house as soon as you feel able, for example, washing up and light dusting. After a few weeks, you may feel well enough to do other jobs such as vacuuming and light gardening.

Walking

Walking is an ideal activity to begin with. Try to walk on a flat surface rather than on an incline. If the weather is good, walk to your local shop – it will have a positive effect on your mental health as well as your physical health.

It can be helpful to go walking with a friend or relative at first. Gradually increase the amount of walking you do over the first two to three weeks after you get out of hospital. In time, you should be able to walk longer distances as you recover. You could use a diary to track your progress.

Getting active

- Aim to do a little bit more activity each day.
- Gradually build up how long you exercise for and how often.
- At first, it may seem very tiring, but this is normal. You will feel less tired as your strength and confidence returns.

Exercise will help to lower your blood pressure and cholesterol, and help maintain a healthy weight; all of which keeps your heart healthy.

Medicines

When you leave hospital, you will be given a supply of your medicines to take home. These medicines may be new or different to the ones you were taking before. It is important to take your medicines as prescribed. If you have any questions about your medicines, ask your cardiac rehabilitation nurse, GP or pharmacist.

Driving

Generally, we advise that all patients who have had a heart attack **do not drive for one month** from the day of their heart attack. Your cardiac rehabilitation nurse will discuss this with you further.

If you have a bus, coach or lorry licence, special regulations apply. You will need to tell the DVLA about your condition and check with them whether you can continue to drive following further investigations.

Insurance

You must let your motor insurance company know about your heart condition, regardless of what type of driving licence you have. **If you do not, your insurance may be invalid.**

Work

Most people will be able to go back to work. The length of time you need off work depends on your diagnosis. Your doctor, GP or cardiac rehabilitation nurse can advise you accordingly.

If you require a “**fit note**” for your employer, obtain this **before** you leave the hospital or contact your GP.

Sex

It is understandable that people with a heart condition and their partners may have concerns about their sex life. Like any other physical activity, having sex can temporarily increase your heart rate and blood pressure. This increases the work of the heart and, in some people with coronary heart disease, may temporarily lead to breathlessness or chest pain. However, sex is just as safe as other equally energetic forms of physical activity or exercise.

Sexual activity presents no greater risk of triggering another heart attack than if you had never had one.

Your cardiac rehabilitation nurse or doctor can discuss any concerns you or your partner may have.

Holidays

A holiday can give you the chance to rest and unwind. Wait until you have fully recovered before planning any holidays.

- ✓ Take an up to date list of your medications and doses with you.
- ✓ Ensure you have enough supply of your medications and keep them in your hand luggage (if flying).
- ✓ Have suitable travel insurance.

When can I fly?

Your doctor, GP or cardiac rehabilitation nurse can advise you.

Seeing your GP

It is a good idea to arrange an appointment to see your GP once you have returned home to ensure that your prescription is ordered and that you do not run out of medication.

Risk factors and secondary prevention

There are many risk factors for heart disease, some of which you cannot change, such as a family history of heart disease, your age, and whether you are male or female. However, there are many changes that you can make which have been proven to help prevent further heart disease.

Smoking

If you smoke, now is the time to stop. Stopping smoking is the single most effective step you can take to help yourself. From the moment you stop smoking, the risk of a heart attack is reduced and will have halved after just one year of stopping.

There are many different types of help and support to quit smoking. If you would like help to quit, discuss this with the cardiac rehabilitation nurse or contact Let's Get Healthy Dudley on 01384 732402.

Alcohol intake

Knowing your units will help you stay in control of your drinking.

- **Both men and women** are advised not to drink more than **14 units** a week on a regular basis.
- Spread your drinking over three or more days if you regularly drink as much as 14 units a week.
- Aim to have three alcohol free days each week.

If you feel that your alcohol intake is too high or that you would struggle to go a day without drinking alcohol, it is important to speak to someone. Please contact your GP or Drinkline on 0300 123 1110.

Healthy eating and weight

Following a sensible low-fat diet and eating the recommended daily intake of fruit and vegetables can help you maintain a healthy weight.

Sustaining a healthy body mass index (BMI) will help control your blood pressure and cholesterol.

You can find out more information regarding the eat well guide, good and bad fats, portion sizes, food groups and the Mediterranean diet in the British Heart Foundation (BHF) booklet '**How I've reduced my blood cholesterol**'.

Stress

During the rehabilitation programme, you will be educated on the importance of relaxation. There are many methods that can be used to aid relaxation, relieve stress and promote a positive and healthy mind which in turn promotes a good recovery.

Blood pressure

High blood pressure can increase the risk of heart attacks and strokes. If you have high blood pressure, it is important to have it **checked regularly** (this will be done frequently during your rehabilitation classes), and to continue with any medication you may be on to control it.

Reducing your salt intake can also aid with controlling blood pressure.

Diabetes

Diabetes increases the risk of high blood pressure, coronary heart disease and stroke. You can prevent these problems by making changes to your lifestyle and managing your diabetes well.

You can do this by:

- ✓ Eating healthily and keeping to a healthy weight.
- ✓ Being active
- ✓ Maintaining your target blood glucose levels, cholesterol levels and blood pressure

Please refer to the BHF booklet entitled '**Diabetes and your heart**'.

What should I do if I get more chest pain?

1. Stop what you are doing.
2. Sit down and rest.
3. Use your glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray as per the 10 minute rule.

Please refer to your GTN card

4. If the pain has not gone away within the 10 minutes, **call 999 immediately.**
5. Chew an adult aspirin tablet (300mg) if there is one easily available.
6. Stay rested until the ambulance arrives.

Useful Contacts

Dudley cardiac rehabilitation nurses

01384 244054

Action Heart, Cardiac Rehabilitation Centre

01384 292233

www.actionheart.com

Let's Get Healthy Dudley

01384 732402

letsget.healthydudley@nhs.net

Drinkline - National Alcohol Helpline

0300 123 1110

British Heart Foundation

0300 330 3311

bhf.org.uk/heart-health

hearthelpline@bhf.org.uk

Dudley Talking Therapy

0800 953 0404

dihc.dudleytalkingtherapy@nhs.net

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please contact:

01384 244054 (Monday to Friday, 8am - 4pm)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/cardiology/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

للحصول على هذه النشرة بحجم أكبر، وعلى شكل إصدار صوتي و بلغات أخرى، الرجاء الاتصال بالرقم 08000730510.

此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

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Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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