Asking your heart team about cardiac rehabilitation

If you are recovering from a heart event or procedure, ask your cardiology team whether supervised cardiac rehabilitation belongs in your plan. Confirm who will refer you and where you would go.

The first days and weeks of recovery after a cardiac event or diagnosis can be a frightening, confusing time. You may sometimes feel your whole world has changed, with the need to take new medications and follow different instructions for your daily life. This is where cardiac rehab may be able to help.

Cardiac rehabilitation combines supervised activity, risk-factor management and education. Studies discussed in the earlier article associated participation with fewer recurrent cardiac events and better outcomes. The degree of benefit depends on the population, program and outcome measured. Ask how often to attend, what you can do between sessions and how the team will track your progress.

Cardiac rehab is designed for each unique individual, and may be right for you if you have experienced a:

- Heart attack
- Heart condition, such as coronary artery disease (CAD), angina or heart failure
- Heart procedure or surgery, including coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery, percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), including coronary angioplasty (balloon angioplasty) and stenting, valve replacement, or a pacemaker or implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD)

Why Should You Care?

Despite the impressive benefits of longer life and fewer health complications, cardiac rehab is widely underutilized. Some reasons include:

- Lack of referral or endorsement from your physician
- No insurance coverage
- Scheduling conflicts with work or home life
- Transportation issues
- Lack of program availability
- Refusing to enroll

The good news is that the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services see such a value in this service that they are actively seeking to expand coverage for cardiac rehab. Here are a few ways you will benefit from participating:

- Lowering your risk of a future cardiac event
- Eating better
- Losing weight
- Returning to work

- Increasing ease of daily activities

What Is Cardiac Rehabilitation?

Cardiac rehab provides a supportive environment and an encouraging team of experts who know just what you're going through. Your cardiac rehab team acts as your partner in your journey to recovery. The experts assess your abilities and help you take the next step physically, mentally and emotionally. The American Heart Association breaks cardiac rehab down into three equally important parts:

- Exercise counseling and training. Exercise after a heart episode can be intimidating or even scary. It's important to get your heart pumping and your entire cardiovascular system working again so you can regain your strength. In cardiac rehab, your team designs a plan specifically for your goals and abilities.
- Education for heart-healthy living. Knowing how to manage your risk factors, choose good nutrition, quit smoking and facts about heart-healthy living are all key elements of the education you'll receive in cardiac rehab.
- Counseling to reduce stress. It's no secret that stress hurts your heart. Cardiac rehab can help you identify and tackle everyday sources of stress,

Check with your physician to determine if cardiac rehab can help you achieve your goals after a heart incident or diagnosis. Rehabilitation is available in many settings depending on the severity of your condition. For more information, visit the American Heart Association.

This article is intended for informational purposes only and does not provide medical advice. Please speak with your physician if you have questions about your health condition.

Talk with Lakeview

For questions about a possible stay, call Lakeview Admissions at (262) 534-8509. During a stay, ask the bedside nurse who can help with your question.