Heart disease, heart failure and recovery

Before discharge, ask which changes in your breathing, swelling or weight should prompt a call. Get instructions for your own situation, including the number to use after hours.

Heart disease, also called cardiovascular disease, includes problems affecting the heart muscle, valves, rhythm and blood vessels. The kind of condition, symptoms and other illnesses determine whether the plan involves medicines, procedures, rehabilitation or changes in daily routines.

Types, Causes, And Signs Of Heart Disease

The most common type of heart disease in the United States is coronary artery disease (or ischemic heart disease), which occurs when plaque builds up inside the artery walls, disrupting the supply of blood to the heart. When one of the arteries becomes completely blocked, part of the heart muscle will die and the result is a heart attack, or acute myocardial infarction.

Congenital heart disease is another common cardiovascular illness, characterized by a problem with the structure of the walls, valves and arteries of the heart, or veins near the heart.

Just like the conditions that affect how the heart functions, the causes of heart disease can vary. While congenital heart disease is present from birth, though it may not be noticed immediately. For later-developing forms of heart disease, high blood pressure, high cholesterol and smoking are the three most common causes, but infections from bacteria, viruses or parasites can also lead to heart disease, as can other diseases, including connective tissue disorders.

Symptoms of some of the most common types of cardiovascular diseases — including hypertensive heart disease, congenital heart failure and hypertrophic cardiomyopathy (thickening of the heart wall) — can vary in severity from patient to patient and may be different for men and women. An enlarged heart can be a symptom of congenital heart disease, or other heart conditions like ischemic heart disease and cardiomyopathy.

In the early stages of most cardiovascular diseases, people experience mild symptoms like fatigue, shortness of breath and dizziness, but symptoms of end-stage congestive heart failure include chronic coughing or wheezing, nausea, edema and confusion or impaired thinking. Anyone experiencing shortness of breath, chest discomfort, nausea, sudden light-headedness or dizziness should seek help immediately, as you might be experiencing heart attack symptoms.

Depending on the level of severity, symptoms of some cardiovascular diseases, like hypertensive heart disease, can be effectively managed by medication and cardiac rehab.

Heart Disease Complications

Heart disease complications are very serious and can be life-threatening. Some of the most common complications are:

Congestive heart failure

Heart failure means the heart cannot fill or pump well enough to meet the body’s needs. The heart and the rest of the body can initially compensate, but fluid retention, fatigue or breathlessness may develop. Clinicians describe disease progression using stages A through D, from risk or pre-heart failure to symptomatic and advanced disease. A separate I–IV classification describes how symptoms limit activity,

including whether they occur at rest. A stage or class does not give an individual life expectancy. Ask how symptoms, test results and response to treatment affect the plan.

Heart attack

A major cardiac event that requires medical intervention and sometimes heart surgery, a heart attack occurs when the coronary arteries narrow so much that they cut off blood supply to the heart. This is often caused by cholesterol buildup, which can break off and block the blood vessel, depriving the heart cells of oxygen. Heart attack symptoms can be different for men and women. Heart attack symptoms in men include nausea, indigestion, heartburn, abdominal pain, shortness of breath, cold sweat, fatigue, lightheadedness, dizziness, and sensation of pressure, tightness, squeezing or aching in the chest and arm. This sensation may also spread to the neck, jaw or back. Heart attack symptoms in women are an uncomfortable pressure, squeezing, fullness, or pain in the center of the chest, pain or discomfort in one or both arms, the back, neck, jaw, or stomach and shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort.

Stroke

Caused by a blocked artery or the bursting of a blood vessel in the brain, stroke symptoms include numbness on one side of the body, confusion, trouble speaking and loss of balance or coordination. Strokes are a medical emergency and require immediate care at an emergency facility.

Pulmonary embolism

When a blood clot blocks one of the pulmonary arteries, it prevents the blood from flowing between the heart and lungs. Symptoms of a pulmonary embolism include shortness of breath, chest pain and bluish skin.

Cardiac arrest

Often confused with a heart attack, cardiac arrest is actually a different type of serious cardiac event, in which the heart suddenly stops beating, usually because of an electrical disturbance or cardiac arrhythmia.

Peripheral artery disease

Peripheral artery disease (PAD) is characterized by a narrowing of the arteries that supply blood to the arms and legs. This can cause severe leg pain when walking.

Atrial fibrillation

Occurring when the upper chambers of the heart beat irregularly, atrial fibrillation (AFib) causes a person to feel fluttering in their chest. A person in AFib is at increased risk of having a stroke or heart failure.

Heart disease medications and side effects sometimes require ongoing medical care to monitor and manage. However, it is possible to carry on with many normal activities during heart attack recovery, or while living with chronic cardiovascular conditions like hypertensive heart disease.

What Is The Best Path To Heart Disease Recovery?

After a cardiac event, some people can return to activities they value with treatment, rehabilitation and changes in daily habits. Medicines, lifestyle changes or a procedure may help, depending on the diagnosis. Ask the cardiology team about the purpose of any proposed angioplasty, bypass surgery or transplant assessment, what benefit is realistic and when activity can resume safely.

Because heart disease has varying levels of severity, transitional care is sometimes necessary to achieve a successful recovery. If you or a loved one is working toward heart attack recovery, or recovery from complications related to a procedure like a cardiac ablation or heart bypass surgery, you may require long-term care, cardiac rehabilitation and other advanced techniques designed to support successful outcomes.

Recovery after a heart problem requires coordination between the clinician managing the heart condition and staff overseeing nursing, medicines, nutrition and activity.

Ask which treatment addresses the heart condition itself and which addresses complications of surgery, weakness or another illness. Obtain clear instructions for symptoms, weight or other changes that need attention.

- Wounds, infection or other complications from heart surgery
- Congestive heart failure and cardiomyopathy
- Valvular heart disease
- Post-myocardial infarction with complications
- Peripheral vascular disease

A ventricular assist device (VAD) helps move blood in some people with advanced heart failure. People using a VAD need a receiving team able to manage that specific device and its emergency plan. Confirm this with the implanting center and receiving team before transfer.

Two people with the same heart diagnosis can have different needs after discharge. Use current symptoms, medicines, kidney function, activity tolerance and home support to guide the plan.

Archived recovery account

This account describes care in an earlier setting. The course, timing and outcome belong to that individual.

The patient was out for a walk in the park with his wife when he suddenly went into cardiac arrest and collapsed to the ground.

Paramedics rushed to the scene and saved the patient's life with emergency procedures and a breathing tube as they transported him to the ER. Physicians were able to stabilize his heartbeat and placed him on a ventilator to support his lungs. Suffering from an altered mental state and seizures as well as pneumonia, the patient's recovery at first was very complicated, requiring diligent care, antibiotics and several types of medications for his heart and seizures. When he began to regain consciousness, the patient was transferred to the treating hospital for continued medical management, respiratory therapy and rehabilitation.

With his wife by his side every day, the patient began to make progress under the care of his team at the treating hospital. Aggressive ventilator weaning techniques helped the patient start to regain his lung strength, and he was able to wean successfully from the ventilator, requiring only supplemental oxygen to continue aiding his recovery. He attended cardiac rehab every day and worked hard with his physical and occupational therapists to regain his strength and mobility so that he was able to stand and begin walking again with assistance.

His wife described cardiac arrest as frightening. She looked forward to getting home and valued the relationships the family had built during his stay.

Patient information — https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-failure/what-is-heart-failure/classes-of-heart-failure

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.

https://www.lakeviewsystem.com/long-term-acute-care