Matters of the Heart

A Guide to Recovering From Your Heart Procedure
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Welcome

Thank you for choosing Scripps for your cardiovascular care. At the forefront of heart services, Scripps provides innovative, compassionate care to people throughout the nation — and beyond.

When you put your heart in our hands, you entrust your care to world-renowned cardiac experts. Annually, more than 76,000 patients receive their heart care from Scripps, making us the largest heart care program in the region. Recognizing our commitment to your heart health, U.S. News & World Report consistently ranks Scripps as a leader in heart care.

From prevention to groundbreaking clinical trials and research, your Scripps heart team is committed to providing you with the best in heart care. In addition to offering comprehensive surgical, diagnostic and treatment options for heart disease, we provide premier rehabilitation and education services — as important to your future heart health as our leading-edge technology.

We want to help you understand how you can improve your health and reduce your risk of future heart-related problems. Our goal as your health care team is to help you return to the highest quality of life. Scripps is dedicated to ensuring you can get back to your daily life and family as quickly as possible. We hope that this booklet will help speed your recovery and provide worthwhile information for lifelong health.

Annually, more than 76,000 patients receive their heart care from Scripps, making Scripps the largest heart care program in the region.
Heart Attack Symptoms

Some of the symptoms of a heart attack are similar to feelings of angina. Angina is chest discomfort that occurs when the heart muscle is not getting enough blood and oxygen due to a decrease in blood flow through one or more of the coronary arteries. The decrease in blood flow is usually due to narrowing of the artery.

In fact, a heart attack has a wide variety of symptoms. They may include one or more of the following:

- Discomfort, pressure, heaviness or pain in the chest.
- Pain or tingling in the arm.
- Pain or discomfort in the neck, jaw or back.
- A feeling similar to heartburn that can include fullness or a choking sensation.
- Sweating accompanied by nausea or vomiting.
- Dizziness.
- Extreme weakness, anxiety or shortness of breath.
- Rapid or irregular heartbeats.

These symptoms can often be mild. Sometimes, women have no symptoms at all. If you are experiencing any of the symptoms, please call 911.

Keeping Your Heart Healthy

Risk Factors

We understand that undergoing a heart procedure can be physically and emotionally taxing, and you may continue to struggle with symptoms that could hinder recovery. An awareness of these symptoms can increase your chances of making a good or full recovery, and reducing your risks can prevent future damage to your heart.

To assist you in the management of your heart disease, it is important that you understand the risk factors associated with heart disease. Some of the risk factors are listed in the questionnaire below. Each question that you answer with a “yes” identifies an area in your life that puts you at higher risk for heart disease. The more “yes” answers you have, the greater your chances are for developing heart disease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PLEASE ANSWER “YES” OR “NO”</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are you over 55 years old?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you male?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have a history of heart disease or stroke in your family?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you smoke?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Is your cholesterol level greater than 200? If you do not know your cholesterol level, do you eat red meat three times per week or more, more than two eggs per week, or use large amounts of saturated/animal fats, whole milk or cheese?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have high blood pressure (hypertension)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you overweight?</td>
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<td>Are you inactive (no regular exercise such as walking, swimming or biking)?</td>
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<td>Do you feel you can’t turn off stress or worry?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have diabetes?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Your answers to the following questions will further help you identify your risk factors.

Do you smoke? Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and disease in the United States. If you smoked before your heart procedure, you must stop. Ask your doctor about counseling, nicotine replacement methods and formal cessation programs to help you quit. The California Smokers’ Help Line is a free telephone program, funded by the California Department of Health, which can help you quit smoking. For more information, call 1-800-NO-BUTTS.

Are you at a healthy weight? Review the Body Mass Index (BMI) chart below to figure out your ideal weight range for your height. Even a small weight loss helps to decrease your risk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BMI</th>
<th>19</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

BMI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normal weight BMI</th>
<th>18.5-24.09</th>
<th>Great!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overweight BMI</td>
<td>25-29.9</td>
<td>You need to lose weight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Obese BMI</td>
<td>30 or greater</td>
<td>You need to lose weight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What is your cholesterol level? Cholesterol is a type of waxy fat produced in your liver. It is found in all of your body’s cells and also found in some foods. Cholesterol is carried in your blood by substances called lipoproteins. The two main types of lipoproteins are low-density lipoprotein (LDL) and high-density lipoprotein (HDL).

LDL is sometimes referred to as “bad cholesterol” because it deposits the cholesterol into plaques inside your arteries, which can restrict blood flow to your heart, brain and other tissues.

HDL is sometimes referred to as “good cholesterol” because it carries cholesterol away from the arteries to the liver, where the body can eliminate it. Triglycerides are a type of fat in the blood that are produced in the liver and also come from foods you eat. High levels of triglycerides can contribute to the hardening and narrowing of arteries, making it harder for the blood to flow.

Cholesterol levels are measured in milligrams of cholesterol per deciliter of blood, or mg/dl. Doctors compare your test results (often called a lipid panel) to guidelines established by the National Cholesterol Education Program for people diagnosed with or at risk for heart disease.

### Total Cholesterol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Desirable</td>
<td>Less than 200 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borderline High</td>
<td>200-239 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>240 mg/dl and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### LDL Cholesterol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimal</td>
<td>Less than 100 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Near optimal</td>
<td>100-129 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borderline high</td>
<td>130-159 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>160-189 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high</td>
<td>190 mg/dl and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A LDL (bad cholesterol) level is considered ideal if it is below 100 mg/dl.

### HDL Cholesterol

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimal</td>
<td>At or above 60 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Below 40 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A HDL (good cholesterol) level lower than 40 mg/dl increases your risk of heart disease. Basically, the higher your LDL the greater your risk, and the lower your HDL the greater your risk.

### Triglycerides

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Optimal</td>
<td>Below 150 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>Above 150 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A triglyceride level below 150 mg/dl is considered ideal. Adopting healthy lifestyle habits such as exercising regularly, losing weight, not smoking and eating a low-fat, high-fiber diet will help achieve these levels. Your doctor also may prescribe medication.

**Do you exercise?** Exercising for as little as 30 minutes a day can improve blood cholesterol levels, prevent high blood pressure and help control weight. If you have diabetes, exercise improves your blood sugar levels.
What is your blood pressure? Have your blood pressure checked regularly. High blood pressure, or hypertension, is a common condition in which the force of the blood against your artery walls is high enough that it may eventually cause health problems, such as heart disease. Even slightly elevated blood pressure levels increase your risk of heart disease.

Blood pressure is typically recorded as two numbers, written as a ratio, such as 117/76 mmHg. The top number measures the pressure in the arteries when the heart beats. The bottom number measures the pressure in the arteries between heartbeats, when the heart muscle is resting and refilling with blood.

If your blood pressure is consistently above 130-139/85-89 mmHg, your doctor may prescribe medication. Healthy lifestyle habits, such as exercising regularly, losing weight and eating a low-fat, high fiber, low-salt diet can help lower your blood pressure. Even a small decrease in your blood pressure level can significantly decrease your risk of heart disease.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood Pressure</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Less than 120/80 mmHg</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prehypertension</td>
<td>120/80 to 139/89 mmHg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hypertension</td>
<td>140/90 or higher mmHg</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Do you have diabetes? If you have diabetes, it is important that you control your blood sugar levels to prevent complications. The American Diabetes Association recommends fasting blood sugars in the 80-120 range for the general population with diabetes. A blood test called Hemoglobin A1c (HgA1c) will give an overall picture of your average blood glucose during the past two to three months. The results give a good idea of how well you are controlling your diabetes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood Glucose</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Under 99 mg/dl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prediabetes</td>
<td>100-125 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diabetes</td>
<td>126 mg/dl and above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hemoglobin Alc (HgA1c)</th>
<th>Optimal</th>
<th>Below 7.0</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>High</td>
<td>7.0 or above</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These values may vary depending on your age and other conditions. Ask your doctor what your goals should be to achieve the most benefit. Proper diet, regular exercise, weight control and proper use of medications all play a part in good diabetes management. If your current program falls short of these goals, discuss with your doctor how you can improve.

Do you have metabolic syndrome? Metabolic syndrome is a cluster of risk factors that increases the risk of developing diabetes. If you have three or more of the following, you are considered to have metabolic syndrome.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Blood Pressure</th>
<th>Men &gt; 40 inches</th>
<th>Women &gt; 35 inches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High waist circumference</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>High triglycerides</td>
<td>&gt; 150 mg/dl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low HDL</td>
<td>Men &lt; 40 mg/dl</td>
<td>Women &lt; 50 mg/dl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High blood pressure</td>
<td>&gt;130/85 mmHg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High fasting blood glucose</td>
<td>&gt;100 mg/dl</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Developing Your Care Plan

Once you identify the factors that apply to you, take action to make lifestyle changes to help you in your recovery. Developing an individualized plan for your care will keep you on the path to recovery and a healthy life.

☐ Smoking
You must stop smoking. Smoking doubles your risk of dying prematurely after a heart attack.  
My Plan: Discuss with my doctor the resources available to help me quit smoking. The California Smokers Helpline is 1-800-NO-BUTTS.  
Quit Date ________________________________

☐ Overweight
My Plan: To work toward my ideal BMI range. Losing weight slowly (one-half to one pound per week) is best.  
Current Weight ________________________________
Goal Weight ________________________________

☐ Lack of Exercise
My Plan: To get at least 30-60 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. I will ask my doctor if I should participate in a medically supervised cardiac rehab program.

☐ High Blood Pressure
My Plan: To achieve a blood pressure less than 120/80.  
Current Blood Pressure ________________________________

☐ High Cholesterol Levels
My Plan: I need to keep my LDL less than mg/dl  
Current lipid levels are: Cholesterol LDL HDL Triglycerides  
I am currently taking medication ____________________ for my cholesterol.

☐ Diabetes
My Plan: To keep my fasting blood sugar (blood glucose level after you have not eaten for at least eight hours) around 100 and my HgA1C below seven. My fasting blood sugars run in the range.

☐ Metabolic Syndrome
My Plan: To keep my LDL below 100, my triglycerides below 150 and to lose weight to my ideal BMI range.
Walking to Health

Whether you are recovering from a heart procedure or starting to reduce your risk factors, a gradual progressive walking program is key to your physical recovery and overall health. Following this program will help increase your endurance for daily activities and improve your level of fitness and quality of life.

**When to start**
If you have recently had heart surgery or a heart procedure, you may have started a walking program in the hospital. If so, please continue the program when you get home.

Walking is considered the best cardiovascular exercise during your recovery period. It is best to begin walking on level ground and to avoid hills.

Walk at a comfortable pace that does not cause undue fatigue or shortness of breath. Your heart rate should not go higher than 20 to 30 beats above your resting heart rate during your recovery.

Your rating of perceived exertion (RPE) should be fairly light to somewhat hard, within the 11-13 range (see RPE scale below).

If you are not on a walking program, the table provided below may help you get started. Please be sure to discuss your activity plan with your doctor.

You should try to walk every day. The ultimate goal is to be able to walk one hour each day — seven days a week. Begin your program at a level that is comfortable for you and gradually increase the length of your walking time. Listen to your body. Slow down when you need to and work your way up to the level you can tolerate. Use the program below as your guide.

Do not advance at a faster rate unless your doctor gives you the okay.

---

**Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale (RPE)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating of Perceived Exertion</th>
<th>RPE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very, very light</td>
<td>6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very light</td>
<td>9-10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairly light</td>
<td>11-12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat hard</td>
<td>13-14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hard</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very hard</td>
<td>17-18</td>
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<td>Very, very hard</td>
<td>19-20</td>
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**Weekly Schedule**

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<th>Week</th>
<th>Days per week</th>
<th>Number of minutes</th>
<th>Times per day</th>
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<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4–5</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>6–7</td>
<td>35–40</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6–7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>6–7</td>
<td>45–60</td>
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Allow two hours after eating a meal and one hour after drinking anything with caffeine before you walk. Avoid walking outside on cold, windy days and hot, humid days. You may prefer walking in an enclosed mall or other temperature-controlled building.

**Remember:** You need to warm up with stretches before you walk. Repeat them at the end of your walk to gradually bring down your heart rate and to help relax your muscles.

Wear comfortable walking shoes to prevent ankle, knee, hip and back problems — running or walking shoes are recommended. Choose a shoe that is lightweight, flexible, has good arch support, has about one-half to three-quarters of an inch of cushioning on the sole and feels good on your foot. You should be able to wiggle your toes in the shoe.

If you experience chest discomfort, dizziness and shortness of breath, or become lightheaded during your walk, slow down and stop. Inform your doctor that you had these symptoms and record them on the walking program log provided in this booklet. Nitroglycerin may be taken for symptoms of angina if your doctor prescribes it for you. Always remember to carry identification and your cell phone with you when you walk.
# Walking Program Log

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
<th>DISTANCE</th>
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Heart-Healthy Eating

One of the most important steps you can take to recover and maintain your heart health is to enjoy a heart-healthy diet. Talk to your physician about your lifestyle management goals, and consider the diet recommendations below to help stop or even reverse heart disease.

A heart-healthy diet includes nutritious foods high in healthy fats and fiber while limiting foods that are high in sodium, saturated fat and added sugars. General diet guidelines from the American Heart Association include eating:

- A variety of fruits and vegetables
- Whole grains
- Low-fat dairy products
- Skinless poultry and fish
- Nuts and legumes

Following a heart healthy diet can help you to control your weight, cholesterol and blood pressure. Ask your physician or dietitian what dietary changes may help you maintain a heart healthy lifestyle.

Fat Facts

While dietary fats are essential for energy and growth, not all fats are created equal. Heart healthy fats include mono- and polyunsaturated fats. “Bad fats” include saturated and trans fats. Healthy fats help to lower bad cholesterol and increase good cholesterol in our blood. Consuming high levels of the bad fats may lead to heart disease and stroke.

- Select lean cuts of beef and pork with minimal visible fat. Lean beef cuts include the round, chuck, sirloin or loin. Lean pork cuts include the tenderloin or loin chop while lean lamb cuts come from the leg, arm and loin.
- Eat fish at least twice a week, especially fish containing omega-3 fatty acids such as salmon, trout or tuna.
- Use olive, avocado, or canola oil when cooking.
- Choose low fat (1%) milk and low fat (2%) or fat free yogurt.
- Include unsalted nuts and legumes.
- Limit processed meats like sausage, bologna, salami, and hot dogs.
- Remove skin from poultry.
- Avoid foods containing partially hydrogenated vegetable oils - these are trans fats.
- Prepare meals in healthful ways including baking, grilling, roasting, stewing or stir-frying.
- Avoid deep fried foods.

Reduce Sodium

In some people, dietary sodium creates an added burden to the heart because it may increase blood pressure. Sodium is an essential nutrient, but most Americans eat much more than the body needs. Knowing where dietary sodium comes from can help you stick to a healthy recommended eating pattern. According to a 2016 publication from the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC):

- More than 75 percent of the sodium Americans eat come from packaged, processed, or restaurant foods.
- 5 percent of dietary sodium is added during home cooking.
- 6 percent is added at the table from the saltshaker.
- 12 percent of sodium consumed is salt that is naturally occurring in foods.

The American Heart Association recommends limiting sodium to 1500mg/day, and the USDA’s 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Healthy Americans calls for a 2300mg limit daily. Follow these tips to help keep your sodium intake to around 2000mg/day, or the limit set out by your healthcare team.

- Prepare foods at home as much as possible. This way you can control the salt in your recipes.
- Choose fresh or frozen vegetables (without added sauces) instead of canned.
- Choose low sodium broth or soup (less than 140mg/serving).
- Avoid processed or cured meats.
- Limit instant foods such as frozen dinners, instant noodles and quick breads.
- Season foods with fresh or dried herbs, citrus, and salt-free seasoning mixes.
- Limit seasonings containing salt, soy sauce, ketchup, pickles, olives, relish, and prepared salad dressing.
- Compare nutrition labels on packaged foods. Different brands of the same item may vary greatly, check labels and choose products with lower sodium.
- Ask restaurants to not add salt to your meal. Use condiments (gravies, salad dressings, sauces) sparingly, and always ask for them to be served “on the side”.

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- Ask restaurants to not add salt to your meal. Use condiments (gravies, salad dressings, sauces) sparingly, and always ask for them to be served “on the side”.
• Re-train your taste buds. A diet consistently high in sodium has made many Americans numb to the taste of salt. After just a few weeks of a reduced salt diet, your taste buds will adapt and you may no longer crave the salty snacks you once enjoyed.

Choose Healthy Carbs
Recent research suggests that a diet high in refined carbohydrates (white bread products, added sugars), may increase risk for heart disease by raising bad cholesterol levels in the blood. Carbohydrates are a good source of energy, but it is important to make smart choices to reduce the risk for heart disease, diabetes, and unwanted weight gain.

Carbohydrates are found in starchy foods (breads, pasta, rice, grains), fruits, and dairy. Aim to include high fiber carbs in your diet daily. Fruits, vegetables, whole grains and beans are good sources of fiber.

Limit refined carbohydrates such as white bread, pasta, bagels, crackers, cookies, cakes, pies, candy, and chips. Limit added sugars, including sugar-sweetened beverages (soda, sweetened tea, energy drinks, bottled coffee varieties).

Reading Food Labels
Learning how to read food labels can help you make healthy choices and eat a balanced diet. Knowing what to look for will help you decipher this useful dietary tool. (insert food label from matters of heart book)

Serving size: Always check the serving size and how many servings are in the package. The nutrition information provided is usually for one serving only, so your favorite treat may have twice the calories you think it does.

Calories: Calories are what count for weight control. Choose foods that provide the nutrients you need without too many calories for your daily diet. Talk to your physician or dietitian about a healthy weight is for you.

Fats: Total fat is a combination of the unsaturated and saturated fat in an item. Foods high in fat will provide more calories than lower fat foods, so be sure to use portion control. Try to choose foods with less than 3g of saturated fat per serving. A person who needs to eat 2,000 calories in a day should eat no more than 15g of saturated fat in a day. Avoid foods containing trans fat.

Sodium: Aim to keep sodium less than 2000mg/day. Items with more than 300mg/serving may be difficult to include in a heart-healthy diet.

Carbohydrate: Total carbohydrate includes natural and added sugars. Choose foods that contain dietary fiber. Aim to consume 25-30g of dietary fiber daily.

The American Heart Association recommends a dietary pattern that emphasizes intake of vegetables, fruits, whole grains, low fat dairy, poultry, fish, nuts, legumes and non-tropical vegetable oils; and limits intake of sweets, sugar-sweetened beverages and red meat. Use nutrition labels to choose foods high in fiber and healthy fats and low in sodium and saturated fat. Talk to your doctor or dietitian about specific sodium recommendations, but aim to limit your intake to 2000mg/day. A healthy weight can reduce your risk for heart disease; talk to your health care team about achieving or maintaining your healthy weight.
Medications

Some heart medications help you live longer by improving the way your heart pumps. Others relieve symptoms and help keep you out of the hospital.

Know what you’re taking
Many people take three or more heart medications. You should know certain details about each. This will help you take them correctly and safely. Ask your health care provider or pharmacist about anything you don’t understand or that doesn’t seem right. For instance, if you get a refill and the pills don’t look the same, talk to the pharmacist before taking them. For each medication, ask:

• What is the medication’s name? (Find out the brand name as well as the generic name, if any.)
• Why am I taking this? What does it do?
• How often should I take this? At what time of day?
• How much of the medication should I take? What’s my dosage?
• What should I do if I miss a dose?
• Should I expect any side effects from this medication? What should I do if I have them?
• Do I need to follow any special instructions while taking this? Are there any activities, foods or other medication I should avoid while taking this?
• How long should I keep taking this? When I run out, should I order more?

Many people take three or more heart medications. You should know certain details about each.
Sleep Apnea

If you have sleep apnea, your doctor may prescribe a continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) or bi-level positive airway pressure (BiPAP) device. These machines send a gentle flow of air through a nasal mask while you sleep. This air goes through your nose and into your lungs, keeping airways open.

Tips for using CPAP and BiPAP

• If your mask doesn’t fit or feel right, talk to your doctor or the vendor about adjusting it or trying a new one.
• If you have allergies or other problems that block your nose, get those treated. These devices work best if your nose is clear.

• If the device doesn’t feel good or work well at first, don’t stop using it. Ask your doctor or someone from your medical equipment company for ways to help make it work for you.

Relaxation techniques

Relaxation techniques can help prevent stress and reduce stress symptoms to help you enjoy a better quality of life. There are a number of options you can explore, including those listed below.

Guided imagery

Guided imagery is a gentle and effective form of relaxation in which you listen to a CD and are guided to focus the mind on a place where you feel safe and peaceful. It can be used to prepare you for your surgery or to help in your recovery after your procedure.

Many CDs and DVDs on guided imagery are available to help you reduce anxiety and stress and support your healing and recovery.

Healing touch

Healing touch is another form of relaxation that is used by many nurses or health care workers at Scripps. This noninvasive technique uses a light touch to restore and balance the human energy system. It promotes relaxation and wound healing, and assists in reducing pain and anxiety.

Deep breathing

Deep breathing is especially helpful for emotional calming. The technique includes the following steps:

1. Get into a comfortable position, either sitting upright with your head supported or lying on your back.

Loosen tight, constricting clothing, especially at your neck and waist.

2. Close your eyes and place your left hand on your abdomen and your right hand on your chest. Breathing normally, notice which hand moves as you breathe.

3. Mentally, slowly count from one to four as you inhale through your nose. Pause for two counts. Then open your mouth and mentally count from one to six (or one to eight if comfortable) as you exhale through your mouth.

4. As you continue breathing this way, try to shift most of the movement toward your lower hand, which is at the level of your diaphragm. Consciously let your abdomen push your hand out as you inhale and pull your abdomen in, letting your hand fall or move in as you exhale.

5. After several minutes of slow, rhythmic breathing, let your hands slowly move to your sides as your abdomen continues to move freely in and out with each breath.

6. After several more minutes, slowly open your eyes and sit quietly.
Physical and Emotional Issues

Physical intimacy/sex
You may worry about having sex after your heart surgery or procedure. Many questions may arise for both you and your partner, including:

• If I’ve had open heart surgery, will sex injure the breast bone?
• Will sex damage the heart?
• Will I be able to perform?

These are normal things to consider but not to worry about. It takes the same energy to have sex as it does to climb two flights of stairs. If you are rested and feel good, then sex can be enjoyed as much after surgery as it was before. In most cases you can begin within six weeks of returning home and after approval from your doctor.

Here are some things to keep in mind:

• If you are tired and tense, choose another time when you feel better.
• Heavy meals put their own demand on your heart, so avoid sex for at least two hours after eating or drinking alcoholic beverages.
• If you have had surgery, choose positions that do not pull on your chest and cause discomfort.
• If you feel uneasy, allow more time for hugging and caressing.
• Relax and get in touch with your partner again.
• Sometimes heart medication can affect sexual activity. If this is a concern, talk with your doctor.
• Do not keep the room too hot or too cold — this is added stress on your heart.

Emotions following surgery: depression
You might experience a lot of emotions when recovering from your heart attack and/or surgery. It is very common to experience some depression after surgery, and it usually doesn’t last for very long. The following emotions may be felt after surgery and may be signs of depression:

• Anger
• Fear
• Helplessness

• Depression
• Decreased productivity
• Ineffective coping
• Dependency
• Grief

Many people also describe an inability to concentrate. Don’t worry about this — it will gradually improve as you feel better.

Talk to your health care provider or a therapist if you feel down most days or are having problems with appetite or sleep. These are signs of depression. Treatment can help you feel better. When depression is under control, your overall health may also improve.

Walking and engaging in exercise can help with symptoms of depression. So does talking with a friend or family member. Getting involved in a cardiac rehabilitation program provides both the physical and emotional support you need during your recovery. If depression persists beyond a few weeks talk to your doctor.

Staying in control
Don’t be afraid to ask others for help when you need it. The following tips can help you feel better emotionally. And they’ll help you maintain healthy relationships with friends and loved ones.

• Keep doing the things you enjoy, such as favorite hobbies. If you stay busy with things you like to do, your mood will improve and life will be more enjoyable.
• Stay involved with friends and family. Try not to withdraw from the people around you, even if you’re finding it hard to talk to them. They can be good sources of support.
• Take an active role in your care. Bring up questions or concerns with your health care team. If treatment isn’t meeting your needs, other options may be available.
• Join a support group. It may be easier to talk to people who know firsthand what you’re going through.
Cardiac Rehabilitation

Inpatient care
If you have had a heart attack, heart surgery, a stent or a pacemaker, you will receive education about living with heart disease before you leave the hospital. The education you receive will help you to return to an active and healthy lifestyle.

Outpatient care
More than 30 years ago, Scripps became one of the first health care providers in the community to offer outpatient cardiac rehabilitation. The goal of outpatient cardiac rehabilitation is to help cardiac patients achieve their optimal level of health through education, counseling and exercise therapy in a medically supervised setting. Participation in cardiac rehabilitation will help you to minimize or reverse atherosclerosis through lifestyle changes.

Cardiac rehabilitation also helps to reduce the risk of future heart problems. It is important that you take an active role in making changes to improve your health.

Cardiac rehabilitation is an important medical therapy for patients who have experienced the following:
- Angina
- Heart attack
- Heart surgery (including heart transplant and left ventricular assist device, or LVAD)
- Interventional procedure (stent)
- Coronary artery disease

The cardiac rehabilitation program is medically supervised and consists of education, counseling and exercise. Participants are admitted through the referral of their doctors.

Your cardiac rehab team will include your cardiologist, nurses, exercise physiologists, dietitians and other caregivers.

Working with your doctor, an individualized program is developed for you based on your diagnosis and any special needs you may have. Cardiac rehab participants attend the program up to three times a week for 12 weeks. A variety of exercise options are available.

In addition to the exercise program, there are other services offered to you and your family. These can include education to help you better understand your condition and how to manage your risk factors, as well as counseling to help you cope with depression, anxiety, anger and/or stress during your recovery. Additional specialized classes and services may be offered such as CPR, tai chi, restorative yoga, music therapy, and balance, meditation, and massage therapy.
Benefits of Rehabilitation

The benefits of cardiac rehabilitation may include the following:
- A better understanding of the disease process, procedures and treatment.
- Improved physical fitness.
- A reduction in cardiac symptoms.
- Improved health.
- A reduction in the risk of future heart problems.
- Improved blood pressure.
- Weight loss.
- Improved cholesterol levels.
- A better outlook on life, less stress, better sleep and better relaxation patterns.

Medicare and most other insurance usually cover cardiac rehabilitation programs.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call us at the following locations.

Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Programs

**Scripps Center for Integrative Medicine**
10820 N. Torrey Pines Rd.
La Jolla, CA 92037
858-554-3300

**Scripps Memorial Hospital La Jolla**
Cardiac Treatment Center
9888 Genesee Ave.
La Jolla, CA 92037
858-626-6493

**Scripps Mercy Hospital, San Diego**
Heart Care Center
4077 Fifth Ave.
San Diego, CA 92103
619-260-7181
San Diego's Leader in Heart Care

Scripps is recognized as the region’s heart care leader for our innovative care and unparalleled commitment to quality. We are consistently named one of America's Best Hospitals for cardiology and heart surgery by U.S. News & World Report.