



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.

PLEASE ANSWER “YES” OR “NO”	YES	NO
Are you over 55 years old?		
Are you male?		
Do you have a history of heart disease or stroke in your family?		
Do you smoke?		
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?		
Do you have high blood pressure (hypertension)?		
Are you overweight?		
Are you inactive (no regular exercise such as walking, swimming or biking)?		
Do you feel you can't turn off stress or worry?		
Do you have diabetes?		

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.



BMI	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	32	33	34	35
4'8"	91	96	100	105	110	115	119	124	129	134	138	142	148	153	158	162	167
4'9"	94	99	104	109	114	119	124	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	173
5'0"	97	102	107	112	118	123	128	133	138	143	148	153	158	163	168	174	179
5'1"	100	106	111	116	122	127	132	137	143	148	153	158	164	169	174	180	185
5'2"	104	109	115	120	126	131	136	142	147	153	158	164	169	175	180	186	191
5'3"	107	113	118	124	130	135	141	146	152	158	163	169	175	180	186	191	197
5'4"	110	116	122	128	134	140	145	151	157	163	169	174	180	186	192	197	204
5'5"	114	120	126	132	138	144	150	156	162	168	174	180	186	192	204	204	210
5'6"	118	124	130	136	142	148	155	161	167	173	179	186	192	198	204	210	216
5'7"	121	127	134	140	146	153	159	166	172	178	185	191	198	204	211	217	223
5'8"	125	131	138	144	151	158	164	171	177	184	190	197	203	210	216	223	230
5'9"	128	135	142	149	155	162	169	176	182	189	196	203	209	216	223	230	236
5'10"	132	139	146	153	160	167	174	181	188	195	202	209	216	222	229	236	243
5'11"	136	143	150	157	165	172	179	186	193	200	208	215	222	229	236	243	250
6'0"	140	147	154	162	169	177	184	191	199	206	213	221	228	235	242	250	258
6'1"	144	151	159	166	174	182	198	197	204	212	219	227	235	242	250	257	265
6'2"	148	155	163	171	179	186	194	202	210	218	225	233	241	249	256	264	272
6'3"	152	160	168	176	184	192	200	208	216	224	232	240	248	256	264	272	279
6'4"	165	164	172	180	189	197	205	213	221	230	238	246	254	263	271	279	287

BMI

Normal weight BMI	18.5-24.9	Great!
Overweight BMI	25-29.9	You need to lose weight
Obese BMI	30 or greater	You need to lose weight

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

Desirable	Less than 200 mg/dl
Borderline High	200-239 mg/dl
High	240 mg/dl and above

LDL Cholesterol

Optimal	Less than 100 mg/dl
Near optimal	100-129 mg/dl
Borderline high	130-159 mg/dl
High	160-189 mg/dl
Very high	190 mg/dl and above

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

HDL Cholesterol

Optimal	At or above 60 mg/dl
Low	Below 40 mg/dl

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

Optimal	Below 150 mg/dl
High	Above 150 mg/dl

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.

Blood Pressure	
Normal	Less than 120/80 mmHg
Prehypertension	120/80 to 139/89 mmHg
Hypertension	140/90 or higher mmHg

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.

Blood Glucose	
Normal	Under 99 mg/dl
Prediabetes	100-125 mg/dl
Diabetes	126 mg/dl and above

Hemoglobin A1c (HgA1c)	
Optimal	Below 7.0
High	7.0 or above

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.

Blood Pressure	
High waist circumference	Men > 40 inches Women > 35 inches
High triglycerides	> 150 mg/dl
Low HDL	Men < 40 mg/dl Women < 50 mg/dl
High blood pressure	>130/85 mmHg
High fasting blood glucose	>100 mg/dl



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).

Rating of Perceived Exertion Scale (RPE)

Very, very light	6-8
Very light	9-10
Fairly light	11-12
Somewhat hard	13-14
Hard	15-16
Very hard	17-18
Very, very hard	19-20

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.



Weekly Schedule

Week	Days per week	Number of minutes	Times per day
1	7	4–5	4
2	7	5–10	3
3	7	10–15	2
4	7	15–20	1
5	7	20–25	1
6	6–7	30–35	1
7	6–7	35–40	1
8	6–7	35–40	1
Maintenance	6–7	45–60	1

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.



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”.

- **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

Nutrition Facts

Serving Size 1 cup
Servings per container 2

Amount Per Serving

Calories 90 **Calories from fat** 20

% Daily Value

Total Fat 2 g 3%

Saturated Fat 0 g 0%

Trans Fat 0 g

Cholesterol 10 mg 3%

Sodium 890mg 37%

Total Carbohydrates 13 g 4%

Dietary Fiber 1 g 4%

Sugars 1 g

Protein 6 g

Ingredients: Chicken broth, carrots, cooked white chicken meat (white chicken meat, water, salt, sodium phosphate, isolates soy protein, modified cornstarch, cornstarch), potatoes, celery, rice, monosodium glutamate. Contains soy.

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.



1-800-SCRIPPS (727-4777)
scripps.org/heart