

## **Cardiac Rehabilitation**

*The next step in your heart recovery*

*This handout explains what to expect from cardiac rehabilitation.*

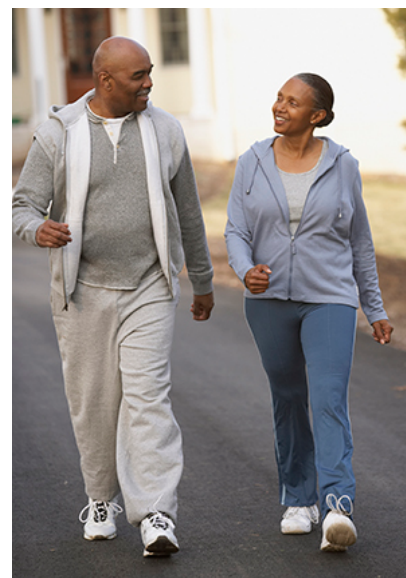
### **What is cardiac rehabilitation?**

*Cardiac rehabilitation* (cardiac rehab) is a program for patients who are recovering from heart surgery or other heart conditions. It includes exercise and education. The Heart Institute at University of Washington Medical Center (UWMC) and the American Heart Association advise heart patients to take part in cardiac rehab.

Cardiac rehab is supervised and taught by a team of healthcare providers, including a cardiologist.

Cardiac rehab includes:

- Exercise training
- Learning about physical activity
- Learning about managing blood pressure, cholesterol, weight, and diabetes
- Counseling on making healthy food choices, quitting tobacco use, and managing stress



*In cardiac rehab, you will learn about heart-healthy exercise.*

### **Why should I consider cardiac rehab?**

Your care team suggests that you exercise regularly as part of your recovery. Cardiac rehab is the next step in returning to a more active lifestyle.

Studies show that cardiac rehab offers many benefits to heart patients. These benefits may include a longer life and a lower risk of having a future heart event.

You will take part in phase I (inpatient) cardiac rehab while you are in the hospital. When you leave the hospital, your doctor will refer you to phase II (outpatient) cardiac rehab to continue your recovery.



*In cardiac rehab, you will learn how to monitor and reduce your blood pressure and other risk factors.*

## **What can cardiac rehab do for me?**

Cardiac rehab can help you:

- Get stronger and healthier
- Learn to make healthy choices and develop a lifestyle that helps you live a longer, more enjoyable life
- Be part of a group for exercise and support as you make lifestyle changes

These positive changes can make a big difference for you, and for your family.

## **Phases of Cardiac Rehab**

Cardiac rehab is divided into 3 phases:

### **Phase I (Inpatient)**

In phase I, your care team in the hospital will:

- Teach you more about your heart condition(s)
- Suggest ways for you to reduce your risk factors
- Teach you to move safely, while following any restrictions that your doctor advises
- Teach you how to safely start a walking (or other exercise) program

The focus of phase I cardiac rehab is to help you get back to your normal lifestyle. It also prepares you for phase II cardiac rehab.

### **Phase II (Outpatient)**

Before you leave the hospital, your doctor will refer you to an **outpatient cardiac rehab program**. This is phase II cardiac rehab. It involves:

- Up to 12 weeks of ECG-monitored exercise
- Ongoing education about reducing your risk factors
- Resources to support your lifestyle changes

In phase II, you will:

- Exercise using a treadmill, stationary bike, rowing machine, or walking or jogging track
- Start slowly and build a safe exercise program that will help you get stronger
- Slowly move into a more intensive program that lets you work out longer and harder

- Have your heart rate, blood pressure, and ECG monitored by your health care providers
- Attend classes in healthy lifestyle changes, nutrition, and reducing cardiac risk factors

### **Phase III**

Phase III cardiac rehab is a continued outpatient exercise and education program. It provides exercise training with some ECG monitoring. The goal is for you to progress to an exercise program you can do on your own. The length of this phase will depend on your needs and progress.

### **How do I qualify for outpatient cardiac rehab?**

To qualify for outpatient cardiac rehab (phase II and phase III), you must have 1 or more of these conditions:

- Heart attack in the last 12 months
- Coronary artery bypass surgery (CABG)
- Stable *angina pectoris* (chest pain)
- Heart valve repair or replacement
- *Angioplasty* or *coronary stenting* (procedures to improve blood flow in arteries)
- Heart transplant
- Heart failure\*

\* To qualify for outpatient rehab after heart failure, you must be medically stable for at least 6 weeks and have an *ejection fraction* (EF) of 35% or less. Ask your cardiologist if you have any questions about whether you qualify.

### **Questions?**

Your questions are important. Your physical therapist will answer your questions about exercise during your therapy sessions in the hospital.

Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns about your medical care.

### **Will health insurance cover all phases of cardiac rehab?**

Health insurance companies usually cover phase I and phase II cardiac rehab for the conditions listed above. Most people must pay for phase III themselves.

If you have questions, talk with your insurance company or with the staff of the cardiac rehab program. Ask them what your insurance will cover.