



What should I expect from cardiac rehabilitation?

A guide for heart patients in England



In partnership with



BEATING HEART DISEASE TOGETHER

NHS Improvement

Cardiac rehabilitation

What's this
booklet
all about?

We have designed this booklet for heart patients in England because the Department of Health has a new guide (called a commissioning pack) for the NHS in England on cardiac rehabilitation. This is to help ensure that the best possible standard of care and services are available for all eligible heart patients. We hope this booklet will help heart patients, their families and carers understand what may now be expected from taking part in a cardiac rehabilitation programme.



What is cardiac rehabilitation?

Who are cardiac rehabilitation programmes for?

Cardiac rehabilitation (or 'cardiac rehab') is a programme of education and exercise sessions which aims to help patients with certain heart conditions to improve their lifestyle and their heart health. Cardiac rehabilitation isn't compulsory but taking part has been found to reduce the risk of dying, and helps improve some of the risk factors for coronary heart disease.

Cardiac rehabilitation programmes aim to help patients who have coronary heart disease, have had a heart attack, have heart failure, or who are recovering from heart surgery.

Where are cardiac rehabilitation programmes available?

They are available throughout the UK and include sessions based on your needs. These sessions usually consist of a mix of physical exercise, relaxation, support and advice as well as education on a range of topics to encourage you and your family to achieve a healthy lifestyle. Cardiac rehabilitation programmes also include information on setting personal goals to help your heart health in the future.

You will find more detailed information about cardiac rehabilitation programmes and how they can help you in the British Heart Foundation's booklet *Cardiac Rehabilitation*, which you can download from our website bhf.org.uk or order free of charge from our orderline on 0870 600 6566.

This booklet is not intended to replace the advice that your doctor or cardiac rehabilitation team give you based on their expert knowledge of your condition.



What does a cardiac rehabilitation programme consist of?

How is a cardiac rehabilitation programme structured?

A typical cardiac rehabilitation programme is usually made up of five stages:

1

How you can access the programme

2

Assessing you for cardiac rehabilitation

3

Developing your care plan

4

Taking part in the programme

5

After the programme

How you can access the programme

How will I know if cardiac rehab is right for me?

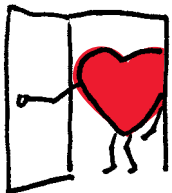


Cardiac rehab is suitable for most heart patients. However, there are some heart conditions where you may not be able to take part in the full programme. Your hospital doctor, nurse or GP will talk to you about this.

If cardiac rehab has been recommended for you, the cardiac rehab team will contact you soon after you leave hospital. They will normally invite you to come for an assessment. You may also be visited by the cardiac rehab team whilst you are in hospital. They will talk to you about cardiac rehab programmes and what to expect. If your stay in hospital has been short, your GP will talk to you and may refer you for cardiac rehab.

If you have not been invited for an assessment within three weeks of your discharge from hospital, please check with your hospital doctor or GP. They will be able to refer you for an assessment if they feel you will benefit from cardiac rehab.

If you are invited to an assessment, but cannot accept for whatever reason, the cardiac rehab team will offer you another opportunity. If you would prefer not to be assessed by the cardiac rehab team, you will be referred back to the care of your GP. It is important to remember that cardiac rehab is an essential part of your recovery and will help to reduce the risk of a heart attack in the future.



Assessing you for cardiac rehabilitation

What happens when I attend my assessment?

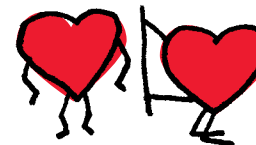


You will be invited to see a member of your local cardiac rehab team. This is called an assessment appointment. Most programmes will encourage you to bring someone along with you to this appointment, which often takes place at the hospital or in some cases in a community setting.

At the assessment appointment, you will be asked to do some simple tests and fill in some questionnaires. These are to assess your heart's ability to cope with exercise before starting a cardiac rehab programme. The assessment is also designed to find out if you are experiencing any difficult feelings and whether you need any extra support to help you deal with them.

If you are not ready to start a cardiac rehab programme because you need further treatment, or for any other reason for example if you haven't recovered sufficiently from your operation, you will be offered another assessment appointment at a later date.

After the assessment, if you would prefer not to take part in any of the cardiac rehab programmes on offer, the cardiac rehab team will refer you back to the care of your GP.



Developing your care plan

Can I bring a friend for support?

If you would like to bring someone along to support you, ask a member of the cardiac rehab team if that's ok. Most programmes encourage this as it can provide you with additional support and motivation. It can boost your confidence and help reassure your family and friends.

What is a care plan?



During your assessment, a member of the cardiac rehab team will talk to you about your personal needs and discuss which kind of programme might be right for you. With their help, you will be encouraged to set some personal goals to be achieved during the programme. These will be included in your care plan. You will be given a copy of the care plan to keep and update as you go along.

Your care plan is designed to help you manage your heart health and rehabilitation. It outlines your needs and preferences and will cover the elements that are relevant to you: managing your weight, healthy eating, stopping smoking, taking your medicines, physical activity, emotional support and relaxation techniques.



What should I expect from the programme?



Cardiac rehab programmes come in many shapes and sizes. They can take place in the hospital or a community venue. Another option is for you to follow an individual, structured programme in your own home or somewhere else that suits your needs. Your cardiac rehab team will be able to advise you on what is available locally and the best option for you.

A date to start your cardiac rehab programme will be agreed with you.

Where your care plan includes attending exercise classes run by the cardiac rehab team they will advise you how to prepare for the class, including what to wear and what to bring. If your exercise classes are held somewhere else, the cardiac rehab team will be able to give qualified exercise instructors the information to help develop the exercises you should be doing.

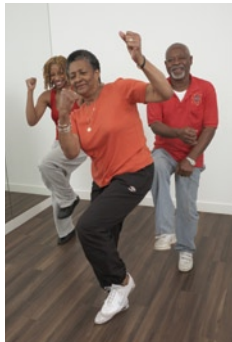


Taking part in the programme

How many sessions will I need to attend?

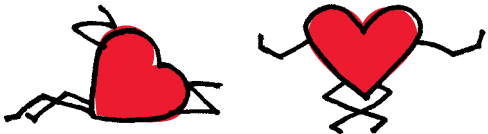
Your whole cardiac rehab programme (including exercise classes) is likely to last between 10 and 16 sessions depending on your care plan. You may need to attend once or twice per week. It's important for you to attend regularly to get maximum benefit from the programme.

What happens at the exercise classes?



Cardiac rehab exercise classes are welcoming and friendly. They are led by a qualified instructor who will be happy to answer any questions you have. Everything will be explained so that you feel comfortable and safe.

Exercise classes start with a gentle 'warm up', followed by a range of different exercises to help improve your fitness. The exercises are performed at a level tailored to your individual needs. At the end of the class there will be a 'cool down' period. Don't worry if you have other conditions like arthritis or problems that affect your breathing that you think might stop you from exercising – your cardiac rehab team will have lots of experience in adapting exercise for patients with these and other medical conditions.



What else will I learn during my programme?

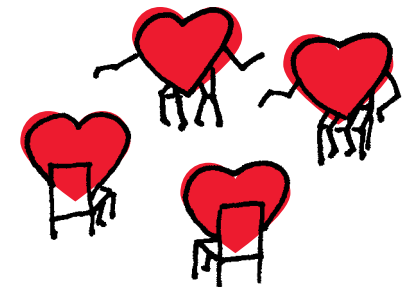


Expect your cardiac rehab programme to provide some education sessions. These might be held each week, before or after your exercise class, or on a different day.

Expect your cardiac rehab programme to include some relaxation techniques and to give you some emotional support.

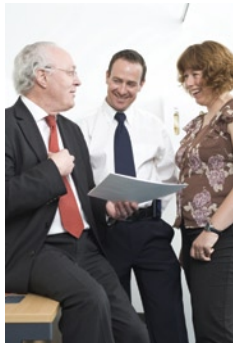
During the course of your cardiac rehab programme, you should be given advice on what you can do to keep well in the future. This may include information such as how to keep physically active, healthy eating and returning to work.

You can expect to be offered extra support if the goals you agreed at your assessment have not been met by the end of the programme.



After the programme

What happens at the end of my cardiac rehab programme?



At the end of your cardiac rehab programme, you will be invited to attend a final assessment. At this appointment, the cardiac rehab team will assess your progress against the goals you agreed and set at the start of your programme.

Expect to do the same simple tests and questionnaires that you did at your first assessment. These are used to assess how the cardiac rehab programme has helped your heart and general fitness.

The cardiac rehab team will discuss the options available to you to help you keep healthy for the future, both physically and emotionally. These options may include attending other exercise classes in your area. They may also include advice on how and where to get further support, such as attending a group to help you stop smoking or counselling to help you maintain a healthy lifestyle.

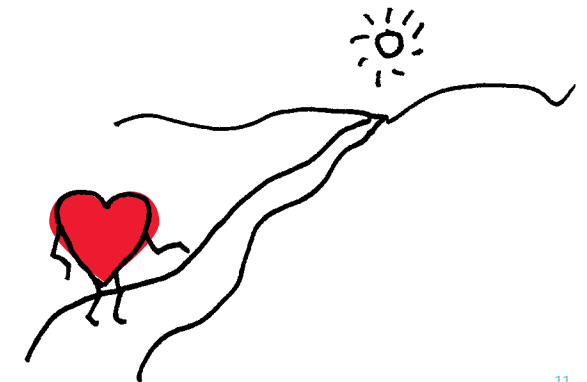
And what about the future?



The final assessment will help you and the cardiac rehab team to set new, achievable goals for the future. This is called a long-term management plan. A written copy of your long term management plan will be given to you.

There are a number of heart support groups around the country that organise regular activity sessions, such as walking groups, and other social activities. Your cardiac rehab team should be able to provide you with details about your nearest group. Or you can call the BHF Heart HelpLine for information about BHF heart support groups on 0300 330 3311.

Your GP will be informed that you have completed a cardiac rehab programme and have been discharged from the service. Your GP will also be sent a copy of your long-term management plan.



How can you help the cardiac rehab team?

Do I get to feedback on my cardiac rehab programme?

It is important that services continue to improve for the benefit of patients. You are best placed to judge whether the services met your needs. At the end of the programme you should be given a feedback survey about your experience of cardiac rehab to help the rehab team improve the service they provide. Your thoughts and views are vital to ensure that the service improves where necessary.

The performance of your cardiac rehab service should be assessed on:

- Whether you were offered a place on a cardiac rehab programme
- Whether you completed the programme
- Whether the advice and support you were given helped keep you out of hospital



OK, remind me what are the key things I should expect from cardiac rehab programme?

In summary, you should expect the following from your cardiac rehab programme, no matter where it is or who provides the service:

- The programme should be designed to suit you
- You should receive a copy of your care plan
- You should be encouraged to complete the programme
- You should receive a copy of your long-term management plan
- You should be asked to complete a feedback survey



Further information

Where can I get more advice?

If you would like more information on your care or local cardiac rehab services, your hospital doctor, nurse or GP should be able to help. The BHF Heart HelpLine can also offer information and support about heart conditions and where to access cardiac rehab services. The HelpLine number is 0300 330 3311 and it is open Mon – Fri 0900 – 1700 (similar cost to 01 or 02 numbers).

For up to date information on heart disease and information on improving your heart health visit the British Heart Foundation website at:

bhf.org.uk



Where can I get more written information from?

The British Heart Foundation produces a range of free publications about living with a heart condition and heart health.

To order a copy of a publication:

go to bhf.org.uk/publications

call the BHF Orderline on **0870 600 6566**

email the BHF Orderline at orderline@bhf.org.uk

Information and links to other useful websites can be found on the NHS Choices website at:

www.nhs.uk



Glossary of Terms

Cardiac – To do with the heart.

Cardiac rehabilitation – Cardiac rehabilitation (or 'cardiac rehab') is a tailored treatment and prevention programme, delivered by a team of health care professionals, that helps improve the health and well-being of people who have heart problems.

Cardiac rehabilitation team – The cardiac rehab team may include cardiac specialist nurses, physiotherapists, dieticians, exercise specialists, occupational therapists, pharmacists, psychologists and doctors (such as a cardiologist or GP).

Care plan – A care plan is an agreement between you and your healthcare professional to help you manage your heart health and rehabilitation.

Commissioning – Commissioning in the NHS is the process that NHS organisations follow to work out the health needs of their local population and 'buy' care from providers, like hospitals, to meet those needs.

Commissioning pack – Commissioning packs are tools that commissioners can use to improve the quality of services for patients. They aim to ensure that patients are placed at the forefront of the service and are central to decisions about their care.

Education session – Information sessions on particular topics. The aim is to help you make healthy lifestyle choices, which may help reduce your risk of further heart problems.

Exercise class – Exercise is physical activity that is planned, structured and repetitive for the purpose of conditioning any part of the body.

Feedback survey – A survey – usually in the form of a short, written questionnaire – which helps services gather patients' views to help improve services for the future.

Heart condition – A condition affecting any part of the heart. Coronary heart disease (CHD) is the most common heart condition and the cause of heart attacks.

Heart support group – A group which can offer heart patients and their families the chance to meet and talk to people who have gone through similar experiences.

There's quite a lot of different terms and titles, can I get a little more insight into these?



Have your say

We would welcome your comments to help us produce the best information for you. Why not let us know what you think about this leaflet or any of our publications? Contact us through our website at [bhf.org.uk/contact](https://www.bhf.org.uk/contact) Or, write to us at the address on the back cover.

A big thank you

The British Heart Foundation and NHS Improvement would like to thank the patients that helped produce this guide.

BEATING HEART DISEASE TOGETHER



British Heart Foundation

Greater London House
180 Hampstead Road
London NW1 7AW
Phone: 020 7554 0000
Fax: 020 7554 0100
Website: bhf.org.uk

G517