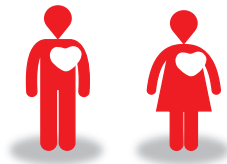


Love your heart



A guide to support recovery
and good heart health

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About this book

This book is for people who have been to hospital because of a heart condition. It provides information to help you recover and keep your heart healthy.

Inside you will find:

- questions to ask your doctor
- a recovery checklist
- information on cardiac rehabilitation
- practical steps for a healthy heart

A message for carers

Carers can provide important physical and emotional support for someone who has had a heart event. This book helps carers understand the recovery process and where to get further information.

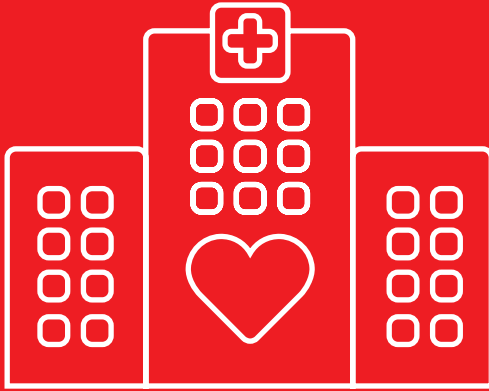
Want more information?

The **Heart Foundation's Helpline** provides heart health information and support.

Call **13 11 12** to speak with one of our health professionals.

If you **need an interpreter** call **131 450** and ask for the Heart Foundation.





In hospital

“ It was crazy. You’ve got 15 people trying to rip your clothes off, put in extra lines ... They never explained anything, they never had any time. ”



What has happened to my heart?

Understanding your heart condition and treatment can help your recovery and make you feel less **anxious**.

A lot can happen in hospital and you may feel shocked, confused, teary, or even angry. It can also be difficult to remember everything you are told.

Ask your doctor or nurse to explain your heart problem and to give you information you can take home.

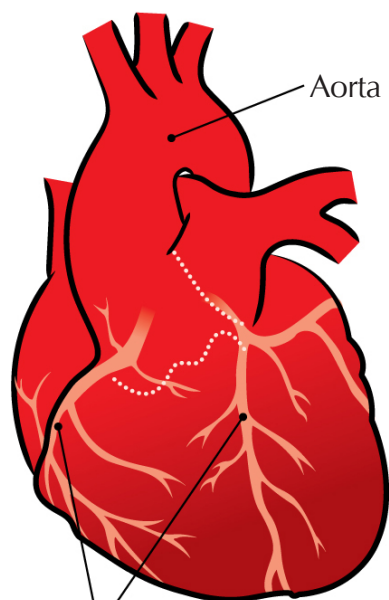
You can also visit heartfoundation.org.au to find out more about heart conditions.

Your heart

Your heart is a muscle that pumps blood around your body.

The coronary arteries are the special pipes that supply blood to the heart muscle.

If the arteries are blocked, this can cause a heart attack.





Why has this happened?

Your doctor or nurse will be able to explain some of the reasons for your heart condition. These reasons are called risk factors. The more risk factors you have, the more likely you are to have a heart problem.

Risk factors include:



Smoking



High blood pressure



Diabetes



High cholesterol



Unhealthy eating



Being overweight or obese



Not being very active

Making changes to these risk factors, such as stopping smoking or lowering your blood pressure can improve your heart health.

The green section of this book lists simple steps you can take to help you with your recovery and manage your heart health.



Questions to ask in hospital

'What has happened to my heart?'

'Will I need help when I am back at home?'

'How do I look after my wound?'

'How long will I take to recover?'

'How long will I be in hospital?'

'What tests do I need?'

'What are my risk factors?'

'What treatments did I have?'

'How can I access home help?'

'Do I need follow up care?'

'How can I find out about other support services (ie. financial support)?'



Notes

Notes

Notes



Leaving hospital

“ I had a little bit of emotional stuff going on... ..You’ve got those things in you now [stents, pacemaker] that you worry about... ”



Getting ready to leave hospital

Recovery starts in hospital and continues after you leave.

It is normal to feel anxious about leaving hospital and you may need someone to help look after you.

Talk to your doctor, nurse or cardiac rehabilitation staff about how you are feeling and where to access home care and other support services.

What do I need to know?

The treatment you had in hospital for your heart condition is not a cure.

There are a number of things you will need to discuss with your nurse or doctor to prepare you for your recovery. These include information about your medicines, risk factors, attending cardiac rehabilitation and follow up care.



Use the **checklist on page 13** to help guide you. Ask your carer, family member or friend to be with you when you discuss this information.



Cardiac rehabilitation – help for your heart

What is it?

Cardiac rehabilitation is an important part of your recovery.

It gives you information that will help you manage your heart health the best way possible. Many people start a cardiac rehabilitation program while they are still in hospital and continue after they return home.

Your doctor or nurse can refer you to a program.

Why is it important?

People who complete cardiac rehabilitation have a better chance of a good recovery. They are also less likely to have repeat heart problems in the future.

How will it help?

A cardiac rehabilitation program can help you and your carer cope with what has happened.

It will help you:

- ✓ learn more about your heart condition
- ✓ manage your risk factors
- ✓ understand your medicines and how to take them
- ✓ get back to every day activities and eat healthily
- ✓ understand the warning signs of heart attack



Cardiac Rehabilitation Program – Referral

I have a referral to _____

Name _____

Contact _____

How can I find out more?

If you don't receive information about a cardiac rehabilitation program, ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to a program.

For heart health information and support call the **Heart Foundation's Helpline 13 11 12.**

If you need an interpreter call 131 450 and ask for the Heart Foundation.





My recovery checklist



- I understand what has happened to my heart and the follow up care I need
- I know what risk factors I have and what I need to do to manage them
- I have a referral to a cardiac rehabilitation program
- I understand my medicines and how to take them
- I have enough medicines to last to my next doctor's appointment
- I know what to do if I get chest pain or other heart attack warning signs
- I will/have arranged a follow up appointment with my local doctor
- I know where to get more heart health and support information (ie. emotional support)
- I know about home care and other support services

Notes

Notes



Recovery plan

“ It’s not until you get home that you start thinking about it. ”



Actions for a healthy heart

Treatment for a heart condition doesn't end in hospital.

There are simple steps you will need to take after you leave hospital to help you recover and reduce your chance of heart problems in the future.



Attend cardiac rehabilitation

Attending cardiac rehabilitation is one of the best things you can do to support your recovery.

If you haven't received a referral, ask your doctor or nurse to refer you to a program.



Follow up with your doctor

Regular check ups with your doctor are important to help manage your heart health.

If you had a medical procedure or heart surgery, looking after your wounds properly will help avoid an infection.



Check with your doctor about signs of an infection and what to do if you think you have one.

Remember to take your medicines list and any test results.



Keep taking your medicines

Even if you think you are better, do not stop any medicines or change how much you are taking without checking with your doctor.

Medicines can help reduce your risk of heart attack, manage your symptoms and keep you out of hospital.

Your doctor will explain how to take your medicines and common side effects. It is important to keep taking your medicines for your recovery and heart health.

Use the medicine questions for your doctor on page 20.



Medicine questions for your doctor

'What are my medicines for?'

'How long do I need to take it for?'

'How do I know if it is working?'

'Are there any risks or side effects?'

'What do I do if I have side effects?'

'Can I use cheaper brands of medicines?'

'How do I store my medicines?'

'Do I need to take my medicines with food?'

'Do I need to avoid any foods, supplements or other medicines while I am taking this medicine?'



Manage your risk factors

Understanding your relevant risk factors is important for helping to prevent another heart attack or future heart problems.

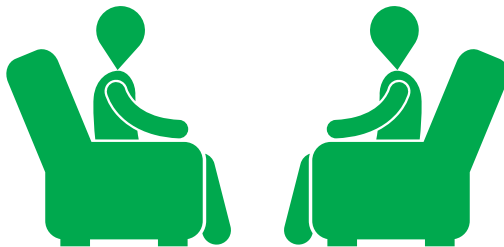
Talk to your doctor or cardiac rehabilitation team about the risk factors relevant to you and to help you set goals for a healthy heart (page 26).

Take care of your emotions

Experiencing a heart attack or other heart problem is stressful. You may feel teary and not sure why. It affects you physically and can have an emotional, social and financial impact.

It is normal to experience a lot of different feelings. Talk to family and friends or with your doctor about how you are feeling.

Beyondblue provides information and support services that can help you and your carer during this difficult time. Go to beyondblue.org.au or call 1300 22 46 36.





Join a support group

Joining a support group can have many benefits.

A support group can offer you emotional support and advice. It can help you feel less alone and more hopeful about your heart condition and future.

For more information about support groups, call the Heart Foundation's Helpline (page 35).



Know the warning signs of heart attack

If you have had a heart attack (or other heart problem), you are at greater risk of having another one.

Every minute counts when it comes to a heart attack. Recognising the warning signs and seeking treatment early by calling Triple Zero (000) can reduce damage to your heart and save your life.

Treatment starts when you call for an ambulance. It is the safest and fastest way to get to hospital.



Learn the warning signs. Call the Heart Foundation's Helpline for a warning signs action plan (see next page).

Will you recognise your heart attack?



Warning Signs Action Plan

Do you feel any

pain pressure heaviness tightness

In one or more of your

chest neck jaw arm/s back shoulder/s

You may also feel

nauseous a cold sweat dizzy short of breath

Yes

1 STOP and rest now

2 TALK tell someone how you feel

If you take angina medicine

- Take a dose of your medicine.
- Wait 5 minutes. Still have symptoms? Take another dose of your medicine.
- Wait 5 minutes. Symptoms won't go away?

Are your symptoms severe or getting worse?

or

Have your symptoms lasted 10 minutes?

Yes

3 CALL 000 and chew 300mg aspirin, unless you have an allergy to aspirin or your doctor has told you not to take it
Triple Zero

- Ask for an ambulance.
- Don't hang up.
- Wait for the operator's instructions.

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Warning signs fridge magnet - available in other languages.
Call **13 11 12** or email health@heartfoundation.org.au



Returning to everyday life



When can I drive a car?

Your doctor will guide you on when you can drive again as this will depend on your heart condition. The suggested waiting times before driving again, include:

Condition / treatment	Waiting time
Cardiac arrest	At least six months
Bypass (CABG) surgery	At least four weeks
Heart attack	At least two weeks
Pacemaker	At least two weeks
Angiogram	At least two days
Angioplasty / Stent	At least one week



When can I go back to work?

You can usually go back to work a few weeks after you return from hospital. It depends on how fast you recover and what type of work you do. Chat with your doctor about when it might be best to return to work and support you might need from your employer.



When can I travel?

You can travel straight away by train, tram or bus, or as a passenger in a car. Check with your doctor if you can travel by plane as you may need a medical clearance form.



Is it OK to have sex again?

It is common to not feel like sex for a while after having a heart attack.

Most people can have sex soon after having a heart attack or other heart problem. If you can walk up two lots of stairs and not get chest pain or shortness of breath you should be ok to have sex.

Take care not to put pressure on the front chest wall. If you had an operation, this area may take 6-8 weeks to heal. Stop if you feel any pain or discomfort in your chest.



What everyday activity is safe for me to do?

Always check with your doctor or cardiac rehabilitation team about when it is safe to do everyday activities, including mowing the lawn, ironing and different types of sports.

After you return home from hospital, start slowly with regular activities such as light gardening and housework. Do not lift heavy weights or objects.



Also check with your doctor or cardiac rehabilitation team about home help or other support services you may need.



Setting goals for a healthy heart

Take this book to cardiac rehabilitation and when you visit your doctor or practice nurse.

Read through the goals listed on the following pages, and decide which areas you would like help with.

Focus on making only one or two changes at a time. If you try to change too many things together it can be very difficult to stay in control.

Let your family or friends know about your goals. They might even like to join you!

My goals



Keep my blood pressure and cholesterol at safe levels

To keep your heart healthy it is important to know your blood pressure and cholesterol numbers. If you have high blood pressure or cholesterol, you are at higher risk of heart attack or stroke.

You can have high blood pressure or high cholesterol and feel fine. Ask your doctor to check them for you.





My blood pressure:

Date						
BP						

My cholesterol:

Date						
Chol						

My goal

Blood pressure:

Cholesterol:



Eat foods that are good for my body and heart

Healthy eating is an important part of looking after your heart. Eating well can be as easy as just changing how your food is cooked or swapping some ingredients for healthier ones.

Tips

- swap white bread, pasta and rice for multigrain and wholemeal (brown bread) versions
- try to bake foods like crumbed fish, chicken or chips instead of frying them
- trim fat off meat and skin off chicken before cooking
- ask for sauces and dressing in a separate dish, not on the food
- choose steamed or stir fried foods instead of deep-fried
- eat less take-away foods (pizza, pies, hamburgers)
- limit saturated fats (biscuits, cakes, chips)

Keeping a food diary is a good way to track your eating habits. You can start by writing down some healthy eating goals (see page 30).

For healthy recipes, visit the Heart Foundation website heartfoundation.org.au/recipes

Healthy eating means a balanced and varied diet



Eat plenty of fresh fruit (two serves) and vegetables (five serves) every day.



Enjoy two to three serves (150g serve) of oily fish (salmon, tuna) per week.



Choose good, healthy oils (canola, sunflower or olive). Nuts (macadamia, almonds) are also a great snack.



Limit processed meats, including deli meats (salami) and sausages. Choose lean meats.



Choose no added salt, low salt, or salt reduced foods. Use herbs and spices instead of salt. Avoid packaged foods.



Swap full-fat dairy foods for reduced, low or no-fat dairy foods. Use margarine instead of butter.



Drinking water is the best for you. Try not to have more than one or two standard alcohol drinks per day. Have at least one or two alcohol free days per week.



Limit refined sugar or added sugars. Avoid soft drinks, sports drinks, fizzy drinks, and cordial.



My healthy eating goals are:





Have a healthy body weight

Losing weight in a healthy way takes time. The best approach is a combination of healthy eating and increasing your physical activity.

If you carry extra weight around your stomach, you are at higher health risk. Waist measurement is a good way to monitor this.

The waist measurement to aim for is:



Men
94cm



Women
80cm



My measurements

My waist measurement is:

My weight is:

My goal

- Healthy waist:
- Healthy weight:

✓ Be more active

Staying active can help your mood and your heart.

If you don't like exercise, there are other ways to get active in your everyday life such as gardening, playing with children and walking to the shops.

Walking is good because it is gentle on your body and you can go at your own pace.

Set some walking goals. Start with walking 10 minutes a day and build up to 30 minutes. Use the table below as a guide.

Week	Minutes	Times per day
1	5–10	2
2	10–15	2
3	15–20	2
4	20–25	1–2
5	25–30	1–2
6	30+	1–2

For information on Heart Foundation Walking groups call 13 11 12 or visit walking.heartfoundation.org.au



✓ Get help to quit smoking

Giving up smoking is one of the best things you can do for your heart.

It is never too late to quit smoking. In fact, the moment you quit, your risk of a heart attack or a stroke starts to drop.

Tips for quitting

- Call Quitline on **13 78 48**
- Talk to your doctor, nurse or pharmacist about nicotine replacement therapy and other options
- Pick a date to stop
- Don't give up. Quitting is hard. It can take many attempts
- Get your family and friends to support you

✓ Manage my diabetes

If you have diabetes, you are at higher risk of heart attack or stroke.

Ask your doctor to check your blood glucose levels (HbA1c blood test). The general aim for a HbA1c level is less than 7%.

Talk with your doctor or accredited diabetes educator about the best way to manage your diabetes.

For more information contact Diabetes Australia on **1300 13 65 88** or **diabetesaustralia.com.au**

Important phone numbers



Emergency phone number

Call Triple Zero (000) for an ambulance.

If 000 doesn't work on your mobile try calling 112



beyondblue
Depression. Anxiety.

For advice and support
about depression and anxiety

1300 224 636 | beyondblue.org.au



For support about quitting smoking
13 78 48 | quitnow.gov.au



For information about diabetes

1300 136 588 | diabetesaustralia.com.au



For information on medicines

1300 633 424



For information and resources
to support carers

1800 422 737 | carergateway.gov.au

Commonwealth Respite
and Carelink Centre

For information on local carer support,
disability and community services

1800 052 222



Heart Foundation Helpline 13 11 12

Free heart health information and support is a phone call away.

heartfoundation.org.au/support
health@heartfoundation.org.au



If you need an interpreter, call **131 450**
and ask for the Heart Foundation.



My care team

My details:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Date of birth _____

What has happened to my heart?

- Heart attack
- Heart failure
- Blocked artery
- Valve problem
- Other

What was my treatment?

- Heart tests
- Angioplasty / Stent
- Pacemaker
- Bypass surgery
- Defibrillation
- Other

Medication name and dose

Who is looking after me?

My Cardiologist:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Fax number _____

Appointments _____

My GP:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Fax number _____

Appointments _____

My Pharmacist:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Fax number _____

Appointments _____

Cardiac Rehabilitation Program:

Name _____

Address _____

Phone number _____

Fax number _____

Appointments _____

Notes
