

# What is cardiac rehab

## Cardiac rehab is a program of exercise and education designed to help you recover after a heart event or diagnosis

Cardiac rehabilitation, or cardiac rehab for short, is a program run by healthcare professionals designed to help you recover after a heart event, procedure or diagnosis. Attending a cardiac rehab program involves receiving relevant information and exploring ways to exercise safely. It will help you make positive heart-healthy changes and lower your risk of having heart problems in the future.

### What to expect

Depending on where you live, you can attend cardiac rehab face-to-face (in a hospital, community centre, clinic etc.) or over the phone or internet (in your own home). Many cardiac rehab programs let you involve your family or support person, helping them to better understand your condition and how they can support you.

#### Cardiac rehab programs are often made up of:

- 1 Exercise sessions personalised to your needs and ability, run by healthcare professionals. The exercises will strengthen your heart and get you back on your feet. They may be challenging or new to you, but the healthcare team will be there to guide you safely through exercise that suits your ability.
- 2 Education classes to gain advice and support on things like medicines, healthy eating, recovery and emotional wellbeing.



Scan the QR code or visit [myheartmylife.org.au](https://myheartmylife.org.au) to join MyHeart MyLife - a free support program for people living with heart disease.

## Benefits of cardiac rehab

Participating in cardiac rehab can help you:

- connect with others who are going through a similar experience
- learn more about your heart condition and your treatments
- understand your medicines and how to take them
- manage your risk factors
- understand the warning signs of a heart attack
- understand your emotions
- get back to everyday activities.

## Common questions about cardiac rehab

### Who is eligible for cardiac rehab?

Cardiac rehab is designed for people who have recently had:

- a coronary heart disease diagnosis
- a heart attack or hospital admission for angina
- a stent procedure or heart surgery (bypass, valve or artery surgery)
- heart failure and cardiomyopathy
- a heart transplant
- a device inserted, for example a pacemaker or implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD)
- a cardiac arrest
- heart electrical rhythm problems, such as atrial fibrillation
- high blood pressure in your lungs (pulmonary hypertension)
- a stroke or mini stroke (also called transient ischaemic attack or TIA).

Each program is different, often with their own area of specialty. For example, some programs can support people with atrial fibrillation while others don't.

Speak with your doctor or healthcare professional about the best program for you. They can also provide you with other options if you don't have a cardiac rehab program near you or can't attend one.

### Do I need a referral to join?

Yes – a referral from your doctor is usually required. If your doctor hasn't mentioned it, ask them directly for a referral to a local program.



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## When should I start cardiac rehab?

It may be difficult to start cardiac rehab when you're not feeling well physically or mentally, but there are many benefits of starting cardiac rehab soon after a heart event or diagnosis. Remember, staff are there for your safety and to support you and your long-term health and wellbeing.

Ideally, you should start cardiac rehab a few weeks after you leave hospital. Don't worry if you've been out of hospital for longer than this, you can still benefit from cardiac rehab.

When deciding on your start date, the cardiac rehab staff will consider your heart condition and medical history. You can also contact a cardiac rehab service yourself.

## How long does a cardiac rehab program last?

Most programs run for 6-12 weeks, with several sessions a week, but this varies depending on the service provider and individual needs.

## Is cardiac rehab safe for people with multiple health issues?

Yes – programs are tailored to individual capacity and health status.

## What happens after I finish cardiac rehab?

You'll receive guidance on maintaining the progress you've made through community programs, home exercises and follow up care.

## Can I continue to exercise on my own?

Yes – the goal is to help you build confidence and independence in managing your heart health long-term.

## Locate a service near you

The Heart Foundation's **Cardiac Services Directory** is a list of cardiac rehabilitation services offered across Australia.



Scan the QR code  
to find a service or  
program near you.



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