
Living with a heart condition

Summary

- Ask your doctor how you can best live a healthy life with your heart condition, as different heart conditions have different requirements.
 - Cardiac rehabilitation clinics are offered widely across Australia, and can help you to adjust to life with coronary heart disease.
 - Medication can help your recovery and can also reduce the risk of a serious heart event such as a heart attack, so do not change or stop taking your medication without consulting your doctor.
 - Healthy eating and physical activity are an important part of living well with a heart condition.
 - Quitting smoking and avoiding second-hand smoke is important for a healthy life and to reduce your risk of a heart attack.
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If you have been diagnosed with a heart condition or you have had a heart attack, it is normal to wonder how it will affect your life. Having a positive attitude and looking after your health will help you to manage your heart condition and reduce the risk of having a heart event such as a heart attack. Ask your doctor how best you can live a healthy life with your heart condition, as different heart conditions have different requirements.

Cardiac rehabilitation for a heart condition

Talk to your doctor about attending cardiac rehabilitation to create a good foundation for living with your heart condition. Cardiac rehabilitation clinics are offered widely across Australia.

Cardiac rehabilitation is for people who have had:

- a heart attack
- coronary artery disease, angina or heart failure
- a heart procedure or surgery, such as coronary artery bypass graft, coronary angioplasty or stenting, valve replacement, or a pacemaker or implantable cardioverter defibrillator.

Cardiac rehabilitation helps you to adjust to life with cardiovascular disease (CVD) as healthcare professionals provide:

- education about your heart condition
- advice about physical activity to suit your needs
- education about your medication
- education about lifestyle changes, such as healthy eating, to improve your heart health
- counselling about living with heart disease.

Medication with a heart condition

It is important to keep your appointments with your doctor and any specialist medical doctors, surgeons or other healthcare professionals. Follow-up appointments are important so your doctor can check your progress.

Be sure you take your medication exactly as prescribed by your doctors, even if you start to feel better. Medications can help your recovery and also reduce the risk of a serious heart event.

Your health professional will explain why your medication is necessary. Do not vary or stop taking your medication without consulting your doctor.

Make lifestyle changes for a healthier heart

Healthy eating and physical activity are an important part of living well with a heart condition. The lifestyle changes you make can help you to manage your blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

Healthy eating

With so much differing nutritional advice available, it is best to speak with a healthcare professional about healthy eating habits to manage your heart disease and to reduce your risk of a serious heart event.

The Heart Foundation recommends:

- eating a variety of foods from the five food groups, and limiting sugary, fatty and salty take-away meals and snacks
- including vegetables, wholegrains, fruit, nuts and seeds in your diet every day
- choosing healthier fats and oils such as olive or canola oil, nuts, seeds, fish and avocado
- using herbs and spices for flavour instead of salt
- drinking mainly water.

Healthy physical activities

Regular physical activity is important for you to improve the way you feel so you can return to life and work. As well as helping to improve your overall health, regular exercise will help to reduce the risk of another heart event. Talk with your doctor about how to build physical activity into your life after a heart attack.

You can get involved with free community walking groups across Victoria, which are run by the Heart Foundation. You can join an established group or start a new group. Other heart attack survivors are often participants in these walking groups.

Visit [**Heart Foundation Walking**](#) for more information.

Avoid smoke

Cigarette smoke is a major risk factor for heart disease. Quitting smoking and avoiding second-hand smoke is important for a healthy life and to reduce your risk of a heart event.

Where to get help

- Your **GP (doctor)**
- In an emergency, always call triple zero (000)
- Emergency department of your nearest hospital
- **NURSE-ON-CALL** Tel. **1300 60 60 24** – for expert health information and advice (24 hours, 7 days)
- **Heart Foundation Helpline** Tel. **13 11 12**

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Heart Foundation

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