



Don't take our word for it!

Here is what women just like you have said about their cardiac rehab experiences:

“When I started cardiac rehabilitation, I noticed that I didn't get angina pain like I used to. I had more energy, felt better, you know, all the way around. I think it helped lower the cholesterol.”

“I was timid. I was afraid to do things. But the class made me feel more confident.”

“It helps to meet other people who have been through what you've been through.”

“I'm able to play with my grandchildren and enjoy my gardening again. My decision to ask about cardiac rehab was the best one I ever made.”



Your Support Network

Involve Family & Friends

Many women enrolled in cardiac rehab report that they enjoy the support they receive from other patients and the staff. Your family members and friends can also make a difference. Read this pamphlet together – the more you learn about heart disease and rehab the more you can help each other.

Need More Information?

This pamphlet was produced as part of a research study funded by the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute, with researchers at:



ST. MICHAEL'S HOSPITAL



University Health Network

Toronto General Hospital Toronto Western Hospital Princess Margaret Hospital

If you, or a family member or friend would like more information about this study or if you are having trouble obtaining a referral from your doctor and would like assistance in finding a cardiac rehab program, please call:

Alexandra Evindar, Research Assistant

University Health Network

Women's Health Program

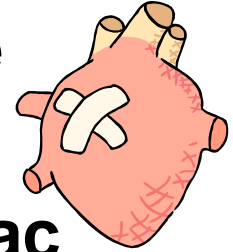
For more information about heart disease in general, you can contact the Heart and Stroke Foundation:

1-888-HSF-INFO

(1-888-473-4636)

Website: www.hsf.ca

A Woman's Guide to Cardiac Rehabilitation



Inside: How to Ask Your Doctor for a Referral

You may wonder if a rewarding lifestyle is possible after your hospitalization. The answer is YES! Cardiac rehabilitation can help you return to a productive and active life.

You may receive advice from doctors, friends and family about changing your lifestyle to become more “heart healthy.” You don't have to make these changes alone. A supervised rehabilitation program can provide you and your family with the information and support you need to live your life to the fullest.

What is Cardiac Rehabilitation?

Some of the factors that increase the risk to your heart cannot be controlled – but most can. Cardiac rehabilitation (rehab) services are supervised programs designed to help you control the changeable risk factors.

It's Not Just Exercise!

Cardiac rehab is a complete heart health education program and includes nutrition and lifestyle counseling, education to help you understand your heart condition as well as supervised exercise training. Because rehab is more than just exercise, almost everyone is eligible to attend. You will be surrounded by your own support team of health care providers that may include doctors, nurses, exercise specialists, dietitians and psychologists.

Should You Go?

Yes! You may feel too sick or weak at the moment to even think about rehab. But, those are just the reasons you *should* go to a cardiac rehab program. As you progress you will:

- § Be part of a friendly and supportive group
- § Get stronger and feel better
- § Have more energy to do the things you value
- § Be able to get back to your daily routine
- § Stay healthy

Not Just A Man's World!

Until very recently, men were the main subjects of heart disease research. We now know, however, that coronary heart disease is indeed a woman's concern. Eight times more women die from heart disease and stroke each year than from breast cancer. However, women are less likely than men to join a cardiac rehab program. That's a shame, as women benefit as much as, and maybe more than, men from participating in cardiac rehab.

Ask Your Doctor to Refer You to a Cardiac Rehab Program

Be Assertive About Your Recovery!

Your doctor or nurse may recommend a cardiac rehab program in your community. Unfortunately, women do not get referred to these programs often enough. If your doctor does not suggest rehab, ask him or her to refer you!

Taking charge of your recovery and asking questions may seem difficult, but it is an important first step. If you are nervous speaking to your physician, take along this pamphlet and use the tips and checklist below to keep you on the right track for a healthy recovery.

“As clinicians, we are responsible for many patients every day. Sometimes, we just forget to mention cardiac rehab. I really appreciate when patients take part in their recovery by bringing up their concerns.”

Dr. Beth Abramson, Cardiologist



Before Your Visit to the Doctor:

- Prepare for your visit. Read this pamphlet thoroughly so that you understand the importance of cardiac rehab.
- Take someone to help you. If you're afraid that you won't know how to ask for a referral, take a spouse, partner or friend with you.

How to Talk to Your Doctor About Cardiac Rehab:

- ❑ Don't hesitate. Ask about cardiac rehab early in your visit. Don't wait until the last minute when you're running out of time.
- ❑ Don't be embarrassed. You may feel that you are too old, out of shape or tired for cardiac rehab – don't let embarrassment keep you from a full recovery. Remember, even arthritis is not a reason for not participating.

Here are some questions you may want to ask about your recovery and cardiac rehab:

- ❑ Is cardiac rehab appropriate for me? (if your doctor says no, ask him or her to explain why. If you are not eligible for the exercise portion, ask about attending the other educational sessions)
- ❑ Where is the closest rehab program?
- ❑ What are the next steps in referral? Will the rehab program contact me?
- ❑ How long is the rehab program?