

# MENDING **YOUR HEART**

Recovering from a major cardiac event can feel daunting. Learn ways to cope with emotions, how to prevent a second event and ways cardiac rehab can help.



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# LIFE AFTER A HEART ATTACK

A major cardiac event can change your life in unexpected ways — and that's OK.

If you've experienced a heart attack or other major cardiac event, you're probably wondering if life will ever be the same. And, it can be hard to know what's normal when you're barely feeling like your old self. Know that:

## It is normal to feel sad, angry or scared.

You just experienced a major health event. It might take a few months for your emotions to stabilize.

**It is normal to feel desire.**  
Most patients can resume sexual activity within a few weeks.

## It is normal to struggle with new lifestyle changes.

Quitting smoking, eating healthier and starting a new exercise program are hard for most people, whether or not they've experienced a major cardiac event. The cardiac rehabilitation program at Beaufort Memorial can help provide the support and monitoring you need to stick with it.

## It may be normal to have occasional chest pain after a stent or bypass surgery.

Angina is another word for cardiac chest pain, which may occur after exercise or a meal. Experiencing chest pain after having a stent placed is not unusual, although it is typically mild and may be expected. Not all patients will experience it, but if you have it, it's important to know the difference between angina and the pain of a heart attack. Determining this difference is often challenging, so consulting your health care provider is crucial. Some medications can help, or it may indicate that something else requires further workup. If you're having pain and your cardiologist or other provider has not helped you decipher if it is worrisome or not, call 911 immediately.

# BROKEN HEART, BROKEN MIND?



Pay special attention to your mental health as you recover.

You might think you would have a new, sunny outlook on life after surviving a heart attack. But for many patients, the months after a cardiac event can lead to sadness, anxiety and stress.

Major health emergencies are scary, and it isn't unusual to experience a wide range of emotions after you have one. Family members who are just happy you're alive may not always understand the conflicting emotions you're feeling, which can create even more stress.

You may find help by talking to friends, exercising, focusing on your favorite hobbies or joining a support group. But if your sadness seems persistent, you feel hopeless or like you have lost pleasure in everyday life, you may need to speak with a professional. Talk therapy or medications could help you adjust to life during recovery.

Even if you think you aren't suffering from clinical depression, it's still important to talk with your health care provider about your mental state. Depression, anxiety and stress can worsen your cardiac health, especially if you feel socially isolated.

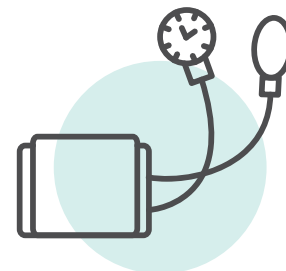
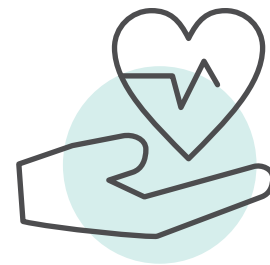
**Find a primary care provider who can help you address depression, anxiety and stress and refer you to a mental health professional if needed.**

# 5 WAYS TO PREVENT A SECOND HEART ATTACK

A big part of your recovery should focus on how to avoid future heart problems.

After experiencing a heart attack, 1 in 5 adults age 45 and older will have a second one within five years. Although you may be more likely to have a second heart attack, making healthy changes can help lower your risk. Here are five key prevention tips to follow:

- **Commit to healthy lifestyle choices.** A healthy lifestyle is one of the best ways to prevent cardiovascular disease — a leading cause for heart attack. Some of the ways you can commit to a healthier lifestyle include:
  - **Getting enough consistent physical activity.** The American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity a week.
  - **Eating a healthy diet.** Avoid foods high in sugar, saturated fat and sodium, all of which can exacerbate heart problems.
  - **Managing stress.** For you, that may mean meditating, taking a yoga class or simply setting aside a few minutes of quiet time each day. A mental health provider can also help you find ways to reduce stress in your daily life.
  - **Quitting smoking.** Smoking damages your blood vessels and increases the risk for heart attack.
- **Complete cardiac rehabilitation.** Research has shown that cardiac rehabilitation may lower the likelihood of a second heart attack by 47%. During rehab, you will participate in supervised exercise, receive nutrition counseling and learn how to maintain a healthy weight. Rehab therapists also provide social and emotional support, which are crucial when making big lifestyle changes. Discuss with your health care provider if cardiac rehab could benefit you.
- **Keep follow-up medical appointments.** Having regular appointments with your health care provider will ensure you stay healthy after a heart attack. Let your provider know if you have any mild symptoms related to the condition. He or she can help you determine if the symptoms are to be expected or warrant further care.
- **Monitor blood pressure and blood sugar levels.** High blood pressure and blood sugar levels can increase your risk for heart attack and stroke. Keeping track of your blood pressure, cholesterol and blood sugar levels will help you stay within a healthy range. Your health care provider can help you choose accurate, at-home monitoring devices.
- **Take prescribed medications.** You will most likely need to take medication, such as aspirin, beta blockers or a cholesterol-lowering drug, after your heart attack. These help prevent a second event, so follow your provider's instructions and continue taking all medications until he or she tells you to stop.



Your primary care provider can help you make daily lifestyle changes to prevent a second major cardiac event. [Find a provider accepting new patients.](#)

# RECOVERY STARTS WITH CARDIAC REHAB



Part medically supervised exercise program and part lessons in heart-healthy living, cardiac rehabilitation at Beaufort Memorial can help you build a better future after a heart attack or heart surgery.

Cardiac rehab serves two important purposes: helping you recover from a heart attack or procedure and preventing another cardiac event. By empowering you to improve your fitness and lifestyle, cardiac rehab puts you in control of your heart health. Best of all, studies have shown that cardiac rehab significantly reduces your likelihood of dying in the five years after a heart attack or heart bypass surgery.

Under the supervision of exercise physiologists, registered nurses and respiratory therapists at the Beaufort Memorial LifeFit Wellness Center, you'll gradually build your strength and stamina with an exercise program designed for you. Building fitness can help relieve chest pain and other cardiac symptoms, boost your energy and improve your ability to do everyday tasks, such as climb stairs. Exercise is just one component of the program. You'll also meet with a registered dietitian and other cardiac rehab team members to learn the skills you'll need to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

[To learn more about cardiac rehab, call 843-522-5635.](#)

## A MULTIPHASE PROGRAM

Cardiac rehab begins before you leave the hospital following a heart attack or heart surgery. During Phase 1, you'll begin to slowly increase your activity level under the supervision of cardiac rehab team members, who will also educate you about quitting smoking, following a heart-healthy diet and other ways to reduce your risk for future heart problems.

Phase 2 of cardiac rehab begins after you go home. You'll visit the LifeFit Wellness Center two or three times per week for 12 weeks or 36 sessions of monitored exercise and education about lifestyle changes. For many people, these visits become something to look forward to as they build camaraderie with the team and fellow participants. You can continue improving your fitness during Phase 3, which features intermittent exercise monitoring, and Phase 4, which is self-directed exercise with medical professionals present.

## HELPING HEARTS

Cardiac rehab at Beaufort Memorial can help you prevent future heart attacks and other cardiac events, but that's not the only way it can benefit you. Cardiac rehab can:



### Guide you in making lasting, healthy changes

The skills you learn in cardiac rehab, such as how to eat a balanced, nutritious diet, can help you adopt healthy behaviors that you'll stick with for years to come.



### Help you follow your cardiologist's instructions.

You're more likely to take heart medication as prescribed if you attend cardiac rehab.



### Improve and safeguard your mental health.

Cardiac rehab can help you adopt a more positive outlook, and research shows that it can also help prevent depression, which is more likely after a heart attack or cardiac surgery.



### Open the door to new activities.

Cardiac rehab may allow you to enjoy activities, such as playing with grandchildren, that were difficult or impossible before.



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