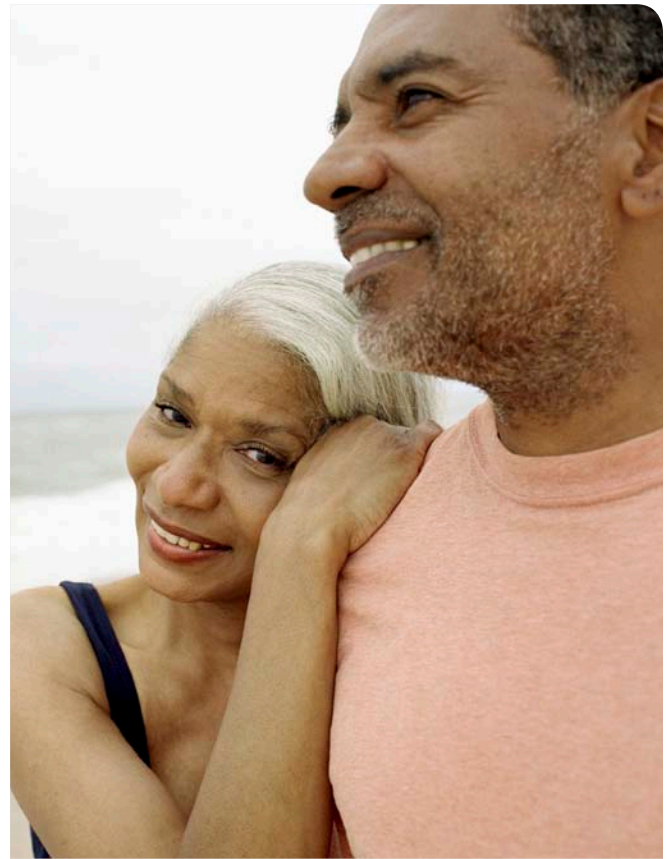




How Can I Support My Loved One?

Someone close to you has just had a heart attack, stroke or heart procedure. To help you handle your feelings, it's good to be aware of them and to share them with people you trust. Talk with members of your family, friends, people where you worship and healthcare providers.

You and your loved one may also benefit from joining a support group for patients and their families. A heart attack, stroke or heart operation affects the whole family — not just the patient.



How can I help?

- Ask questions at the hospital.
- Discuss things with your spouse and children.
- Praise your loved one for new good habits, and try not to nag.
- Take a CPR class.
- Learn the warning signs of heart attack, sudden cardiac arrest and stroke.
- Help your loved one manage his or her medicine and treatment program.

How might I feel and what can I do?

- **Guilty.** You may feel you could have done something to prevent what happened. Instead, try thinking about making healthy changes instead of worrying about the past.

- **Afraid.** You may be afraid that the life you had planned together will change. Talk to the person about your fears. Also, make sure your finances, wills and insurance are in order so you feel more prepared for the future.
- **Overwhelmed.** The suddenness of stroke and some heart conditions often allows no time to adjust to the shifting roles. Ask for help! Many friends and relatives will be happy to help out with meals, rides and childcare.
- **Depressed.** It's common to feel sad and edgy at a time like this. You may have trouble sleeping, have less energy or feel ill. These feelings should go away as things get better. You also may want to join a support group. Talking with other caregivers may help you feel less isolated and better able to deal with your feelings.

(continued)



What could change and how can I deal with it?

- You may have less time to yourself as you take on a caregiving role. One of the most important things you can do for yourself and your loved one is to make time and space for yourself.
- Your sex life may change. Talk about your feelings with your spouse and the doctor. It's best to resume sexual activities slowly and stay close with your spouse as he or she recovers.

How can we both be healthier?

It's much easier — and more fun — for your loved one to make changes if you're making changes at the same time.

- Make changes slowly. Take it one step at a time.
- Learn to cook foods that are low in saturated and *trans* fats, sodium (salt) and added sugars that your loved one will like.
- Find a physical activity you both enjoy and do it together.

- Help your spouse stop smoking, and if you smoke, make a plan to quit together.
- Suggest active outings for the family.



HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

Where can I take a CPR class?

What can I do to help with rehabilitation?

My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.