



How Will I Recover From My Heart Attack?

There's good news for people who have had a heart attack. Soon you'll be able to do most of the things you used to do!

Now is a good time to make healthy changes in your lifestyle. Heart disease can get worse and taking these steps can help keep you healthier.

After a heart attack, it's common to worry a lot. Getting better and feeling good about yourself may take time. It helps to do as your doctor says and to learn about keeping your heart healthy.



Are my feelings normal?

Most patients say they have unpleasant feelings after a heart attack. These are normal and easy to understand. It's a good idea to talk to someone about your feelings — don't keep them inside.

In time, these feelings should go away.

Fear:

- of dying
- of chest pains
- that you can't have sex
- that you can't work

Anger:

- that it happened to you
- at family and friends

Depression, such as thinking...

- "Life is over."

- You might not be the same again.
- Others might think you are weak.

How will my family feel?

People who are close to you will also "feel" your heart attack. Instead of keeping bad feelings in, you should all talk about them.

Family members may feel...

- Frightened to see you in the hospital.
- Angry that the heart attack came at a bad time.
- Guilty because they think they "caused" it, even if they know it's not possible.

What changes should I make?

- Get help to quit if you smoke.
- Manage high blood pressure.
- Eat healthy meals low in saturated fat, *trans* fat, sodium (salt) and added sugars.

(continued)



- Get involved in regular physical activities.
- Reach and maintain a healthy weight.
- Take your medicine exactly as prescribed.

What about sex?

- Check with your doctor first, but you should be able to have sex the way you did before. You should be ready when you're able to walk around easily.
- If you have chest pain during sex, have lost interest, or are worried about having sex, talk with your doctor.

When can I go back to work?

- Most people go back to work in two weeks to three months.
- Your doctor may have you take tests to find out if you can do the kind of work you did before.
- Some people change jobs to make it easier on their heart.
- Ask your doctor about cardiac rehabilitation programs in your area.



Check with your doctor before resuming sexual activities. You should be able to have sex the way you did before your heart attack.

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:

Can I play sports?

What if I stay depressed?

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.