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## Cardiac Care Discharge Guide

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## The Lenmed team wishes you well and hope your recovery is a relaxing and restful time for you.

On discharge from hospital, please ensure that you have the number of the emergency unit on hand, which is available 24 hours a day, and that you have been provided with both verbal and written post procedure instructions on discharge.

**These guidelines have been compiled to assist you during your healing process.**

## When at home

Check that you have a list of all the medicines you need to take. Make sure you take them exactly as directed and that you have been given instructions about your medicines and how to take them.

Make sure you have a pharmacy nearby so you can get any prescription filled. DO NOT skip doses. Talk with your treating doctor if your medicines are not working for you. Together you can come up with another treatment plan.

Remember that recovery after a heart attack takes time. Plan to take it easy for at least 4 to 6 weeks while you recover; then return to normal activity when your treating doctor says it is OK.

Ask your treating doctor about joining a cardiac rehab program. This can help strengthen your heart and lungs and give you more energy and confidence.

Tell your treating doctor if you are feeling depressed. Feelings of sadness are common after a heart attack, but it is important to speak to someone or seek counselling if you are feeling overwhelmed by these feelings. These feelings most often pass within a month.

Ask your family members to learn CPR; this is an important skill that can save lives when needed.

**CALL YOUR NEAREST HOSPITAL  
EMERGENCY UNIT IMMEDIATELY IF YOU  
HAVE CHEST PAIN OR PAIN THAT GOES  
TO YOUR SHOULDER, NECK, OR BACK. DO  
NOT DRIVE YOURSELF TO THE HOSPITAL.**



## Care of your access site

Following a trans radial cardiac catheterization procedure, it is important to avoid excess moisture to the access site.

Resist the urge to submerge your hands in dishwater, into bathtubs or other water sources for at least 5 days following the procedure.

Avoid flexing your wrists by doing activities such as hammering, playing tennis, or swinging objects.

We recommend that you not lift more than 2 kilograms of weight for 72 hours following your procedure.

If bleeding or swelling should occur, apply manual pressure directly over the access site and report to the nearest hospital for evaluation.

Seek immediate medical attention if you experience loss of sensation, redness, swelling or discharge at the access site.

For minor discomfort, you may take acetaminophen as prescribed, elevate the affected arm and apply an ice pack for comfort and swelling.

## Physical activity

You should know the signs and symptoms of angina (a type of chest pain caused by reduced blood flow to the heart) which could present themselves during physical activity.

You may feel pressure, squeezing, burning, or tightness in your chest. You may also notice these symptoms in your arms, shoulders, neck, jaw, throat, or back.

Some people also feel discomfort in their back, shoulders, and stomach area.

You may have indigestion or feel sick to your stomach.

You may feel tired and be short of breath, sweaty, lightheaded, or weak.

You may have chest pain during physical activity, such as climbing stairs or walking uphill, lifting, sexual activity, or when you are out in cold weather. It can also happen when you are resting or it can wake you up when you are sleeping.

When you experience this chest pain, it is important to talk to your treating doctor about what to do. However, it is important that you take it easy for the first 4 to 6 weeks.

Avoid heavy lifting. Get some help with household chores if you can.

Take 30 to 60 minutes to rest in the afternoon for first 4 to 6 weeks.

Try to go to bed early and get plenty of sleep.

Before starting to exercise, your provider may have you do an exercise test and recommend an exercise plan. This may happen before you leave the hospital or soon afterward. Do not change your exercise plan before talking with your provider.

Your provider may refer you to cardiac rehabilitation program. There you will learn how to slowly increase your exercise and how to take care of your heart disease.

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You should be able to talk comfortably when you are doing any activity, such as walking, setting the table, and doing laundry. **If you cannot, stop the activity.**

Ask your treating doctor about when you can return to work. Expect to be away from work for at least a week.

Talk to your treating doctor before engaging in sexual activity. Ask your treating doctor when it is OK to start again. Do not take Viagra, Levitra, Cialis or any herbal remedy for erection problems without checking with your provider first.

#### Returning to normal activities will depend on:

✓ Your physical condition before your heart attack

✓ The size of your heart attack

✓ If you had complications

✓ The overall speed of your recovery



## Diet and lifestyle

Do not drink any alcohol for at least 2 weeks. Ask your provider when you may start. Limit how much you drink. Women should have only one drink a day, and men should have no more than two a day. Try to drink alcohol only when you are eating.

**If you smoke, STOP!** Ask your treating doctor for help quitting if you need it. Do not let anybody smoke in your home, since second-hand smoke can harm you. Try to stay away from things that are stressful for you. If you are feeling stressed all the time, or if you are feeling very sad, talk with your treating doctor. They can refer you to a counsellor.

Learn more about what you should eat to make your heart and blood vessels healthier – avoid salty foods and stay away from fast food restaurants.

## Other lifestyle changes

Your treating doctor may also recommend that you:

**Lose weight.** If you are overweight or obese, your provider will work with you to lose extra kilograms. Making dietary changes and getting more physical exercise can help. A good goal is to lose your 10% of your body weight in one year.

**Stop smoking.** Sign up for a stop-smoking program to make it more likely for you to quit for good. You can join a stop-smoking support group. Or ask your treating doctor about nicotine replacement products or medicines to help you quit.

**Learn to manage stress.** Stress management techniques to help you deal with stress in your home and work life. This will help you feel better emotionally and ease the strain on your heart





# Medications

Most people who have had a heart attack are sent home with prescriptions for several medications. It is important to take each of these drugs exactly as directed. Some of these medications can help you to live longer while others help to prevent or treat recurrent symptoms, such as chest pain.

**Aspirin** helps prevent future blood clots and decreases the risk of death after a heart attack. To learn more about the benefits of Aspirin, you can read Patient Education: Aspirin in the primary prevention of cardiovascular disease and cancer (Beyond the Basics), <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/aspirin-in-the-primary-prevention-of-cardiovascular-disease-and-cancer-beyond-the-basics>

Antiplatelet drugs such as clopidogrel (brand name: **Plavix**), ticagrelor (brand name: **Brilinta**), or prasugrel (brand name: **Effient**) are given to people who have had a stent placed or received clot-busting drugs to open a blocked artery. These drugs are given with aspirin to prevent platelets from clumping inside arteries and reduce the risk of re-blockage.

**DO NOT** stop taking aspirin or antiplatelet drugs without first checking with your treating doctor. This is important even if you are seeing a different doctor for something unrelated to your heart condition (for example, a surgeon or gastroenterologist).

Sometimes a doctor or nurse will tell you to stop your medications prior to a procedure (such as surgery or a colonoscopy); however, this may be unsafe and you should discuss it with the treating doctor who takes care of your heart issues before stopping any of your medications.

A beta blocker such as metoprolol (brand names: **Lopressor**, **Toprol-XL**) or atenolol (brand name: **Tenormin**) is a medication that protects your heart from stress and can prevent future heart attacks. It can slow your heart rate. It can take weeks for your body to get used to a beta blocker. The dose may need to be changed a few times as your body adjusts.

Nitrates such as isosorbide dinitrate (brand name: **Isordil**), nitro-glycerine patch, pills, or spray are medications that widen (dilate) coronary blood vessels, bringing more blood to the heart muscle, and are used to treat or prevent chest pain. Nitrates should be taken exactly as prescribed by the doctor.

An ACE inhibitor such as lisinopril (brand name: **Zestril**) can help your heart work better after a heart attack and decrease the amount of damage from a heart attack; it may also help prevent heart failure. ACE inhibitors also lower blood pressure.

A statin such as atorvastatin (brand name: **Lipitor**), rosuvastatin (brand name: **Crestor**) is a medication that helps to lower bad cholesterol (LDL-cholesterol) levels and can help prevent another heart attack or stroke. Because statins help stabilize fatty deposits inside the arteries that can cause heart attacks, they are often given in high doses after a heart attack, even to people whose cholesterol levels are normal or low.



MEDICATIONS AFTER A HEART ATTACK ARE IMPORTANT. TO HELP YOU TAKE THEM CORRECTLY, KEEP A CURRENT LIST OF THEIR NAMES AND HOW MANY TIMES PER DAY YOU TAKE THEM.



## When to call the doctor

Call your provider if you feel:



**PAIN, PRESSURE, TIGHTNESS, OR HEAVINESS IN YOUR CHEST, ARM, NECK, OR JAW**



**SHORTNESS OF BREATH**



**GAS PAINS OR INDIGESTION**



**NUMBNESS IN YOUR ARMS**



**SWEATY, OR IF YOU LOSE COLOUR**



**LIGHTHEADED**

## Follow up care after a heart attack

Following your treating doctor's advice, and participating in a cardiac rehabilitation program, are the best ways to recover from a heart attack.

It is important to schedule and attend periodic visits with your treating doctor or cardiologist.

**Follow-up care is very important!** People who have had one heart attack have a significantly increased risk of more cardiac events, including chest pain, another heart attack, heart failure, and an increased risk of dying. The risk of these problems can be reduced by following recommendations for rehabilitation, follow-up visits, and treatments.

Over time, the treatment plan may change as your heart health improves or other medical problems develop.

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