

# HEART SURGERY



## HOME MANAGEMENT GUIDELINES

Cardiac Rehab Programmes

Attend a cardiac rehab programme. This is an exercise and education programme to help you address your cardiac condition and maintain a healthy lifestyle. Participants who attend cardiac rehab programs have shown a 20-25% overall reduction in mortality following diagnosis of coronary disease (Evidenced based best practice guideline cardiac rehabilitation, New Zealand Guidelines Group 2002)

***You should be contacted by your local cardiac rehabilitation nurse who will advise you of services available in your area.***

***Usually these programmes consist of physical activity and information on***

- *Exercise & how to be physically active.*
- *Healthy eating*
- *Medication*
- *Understanding heart disease.*

**Most patients will be invited to attend a Cardiac rehab programme approx. 1month following cardiac surgery.**

For further general information or to find your local cardiac rehab programme check the NZ heart foundation website.

<https://hhdirectory.heartfoundation.org.nz/>

**What to do when you get home**

- ♥ You will not be able to drive legally for 4 weeks from the day of your operation.



- ♥ If you are a specialist driver who drives a taxi, truck or bus you will have a driving restriction. You are not able to return to work until you have completed a cardiac specialist assessment.
- ♥ Normal sexual activity may be resumed whenever comfortable. Sexual problems after heart surgery may be due to pain and fatigue. If you find certain positions cause discomfort to the chest area try different ones.
- ♥ Returning to work or sport will depend on how physically demanding those activities are. For example a builder would not be able to return to building for 3 months to ensure the breast bone is completely healed. Please discuss this with your specialist at your follow up check.
- ♥ You will have been taught some neck, shoulder and leg exercises by the physio. Carry on doing these 1-2 times daily for 3-4 weeks following your discharge (see at back of booklet).

**This weekly home activity programme *is a guide*. You are likely to feel very tired so start small and build-up. Progress at your own pace. Do not be concerned if you can't do all the activities listed. Avoid activities that make you breathless or cause you to strain. The breast bone can take up to 2 months to heal so avoid putting unnecessary pressure through your arms when getting up from your bed or chair.**

## **Week 1 home:**

- ♥ Your activity level should be the same as you were doing in hospital
- ♥ Allow lots of rest. You will most likely feel very tired. Friends and family will be eager to check how you are doing but be aware this can be quite tiring.
- ♥ Get up, shower and dress everyday
- ♥ Take regular pain relief. Continue the pain relief medication as prescribed and talk to your GP if pain relief seems inadequate.
- ♥ Your appetite and bowel function may be sluggish. This is normal. Try to have small frequent meals, fluids and some fruit. If your appetite is very poor eat whatever is appealing.
- ♥ No heavy lifting (2kg maximum).
- ♥ Walk for up to 10 minutes twice a day on level ground at pace you find comfortable.
- ♥ While travelling in the car tuck a small cushion or towel between the seat belt and your chest for comfort.
- ♥ Make an appointment to see your GP next week for a check- up, review of your medication, removal of your stitches and to assess pain relief medication.



## **Week 2: Progress at your own pace. Some people will need to progress more slowly**


- ♥ Do light activities around the house, helping with meals, dishes etc
- ♥ Allow lots of rest. Concentrating on simple tasks such as reading a book or paper work can be difficult. This is normal and will improve.

- ♥ Walk for up to 15 minutes twice a day at a pace you find comfortable
- ♥ No heavy lifting. Continue pain relief.

### **Week 3: Progress at your own pace**

- ♥ Do normal housework but avoid activities that cause chest discomfort or fatigue. For example don't vacuum the whole house in one day.
- ♥ Activities in the garden e.g. light cutting and weeding
- ♥ Small social outings e.g. visiting friends, eating out, cinema.
- ♥ Walk for up to 20 minutes twice daily at a pace you feel comfortable.
- ♥ No heavy lifting
- ♥ If you can cough or take a deep breath without pain you could start to reduce your pain relief. Otherwise please continue pain relief.

### **Week 4: Progress at your own pace**

- ♥  You may start driving four weeks from the day of your operation.
- ♥ Walk for up to 25 minutes twice daily.
- ♥ Increase social activities
- ♥ Continue to take pain relief if required
- ♥ If your job is non-physical you may return to work. Consider working part time to start with as concentrating can be difficult initially.

### **Week 5: Progress at your own pace**

- ♥ Walk for up to 30 minutes once or twice daily.
- ♥ Continue with pain relief if required
- ♥ *Are you booked into or attending a cardiac rehab programme?*

### **Week 6-8 Progress at your own pace**

- ♥ Returning to work or part time. Check with your specialist if your job is physical.
- ♥ Walk for 30 minutes every day. Increase exercise, incl. aerobic exercise (e.g. swimming, cycling). Return to non-contact sport.
- ♥ Upgrade all activities to normal if you are able to do so.

## **Emotional Responses to Heart Attack/PCI/Surgery**

During recovery from a Heart event whether PCI (angioplasty), Heart Attack, or Surgery we may go through these similar feelings. These feelings are virtually universal and usually temporary. Remember recovery is a process, not an event; it is both a physical and psychological process. Often we feel great physically pretty quickly but it is the emotional and mental side of health that can take a little longer to recover.

The chart below shows how you may be feeling but also what your partner / family may be experiencing the same time in facing this new life event.

Hospital Self	Partner Family	Home Self	Partner family
Panic Fear Confusion Disorientation Difficulty sleeping <i>Transient</i> <i>Delirium</i> <i>&amp; Hallucinations</i>	Disbelief Helplessness Guilt Love Loss Anticipatory Grief Loss of Trust (God) Denial Numbing	Anxiety++ Depression Disbelief Anger Irritability Emotional Fragility & Tearfulness Disturbed Sleep Decreased Self Esteem Social withdrawal Conflict with Family "Caregiver Vigilance" Diminished libido/Impotence <i>Impaired cognitive            functioning (mild +            transient)</i> Checking and Monitoring self Avoiding activities or Excitement	Lots of adjustment + Stress Role reversals, changed Routines, Supporting rest of family Anxiety Uncertainty Limiting what they let you do Not understanding Pushing too hard, too fast Not supporting Expecting you to "get over it"

Some ways to manage stress/anxiety

- Relaxation techniques
- Gentle exercise
- Creative activity- focus on something different

- Prayer
- Meditation
- Talk to someone
- Don't avoid your fears and worries
- Decide whether thoughts are accurate or helpful
- Schedule worry time
- Problem solve
- Plan, time management

#### Some ways to manage low mood

- Engage in pleasant / satisfying activities
- Do things even if you think you won't enjoy them
- Have some social contact every day
- Take care of your appearance (look good, feel good)
- Talk to someone about your feelings
- Find meaningful positives in what has happened
- Focus on what you can do, not what you can't





*If you find that anxiety or low mood persist some months talk to your GP about help for this.*

*Check out the NZ Heart Foundations website where real people share their stories of heart disease in their own words. <https://www.heartfoundation.org.nz/journeys#browse-stories>*

## **Exercises Following Heart Surgery**

The goal is to restore full movement in your neck and shoulders, and to improve posture. If the exercises are painful to perform, ease back or discontinue.

Repeat each exercise 10 times, 1-2 times daily

<p><b>Exercise 1</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sit or stand with good posture.</li><li>2. Keeping your face forward, tip your ear towards your right shoulder.</li><li>3. Repeat on the left side.</li></ol>	
<p><b>Exercise 2</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sit or stand with good posture.</li><li>2. Turn your head to the right side.</li><li>3. Repeat to the left side.</li></ol>	
<p><b>Exercise 3</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sit or stand with good posture.</li><li>2. Raise both arms and lower both arms.</li><li>3. Repeat.</li></ol>	
<p><b>Exercise 4</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sit or stand with good posture.</li><li>2. Pull the right elbow and arm across your chest gently.</li><li>3. Repeat with left elbow and arm.</li></ol>	
<p><b>Exercise 5</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Sit or stand with good posture.</li><li>2. Begin with shoulders relaxed.</li><li>3. Hunch shoulders up towards your ears.</li><li>4. Relax your shoulders and repeat.</li></ol>	