

# Outpatient Cardiac Rehab

## What is cardiac rehab?

**Cardiac rehab (rehabilitation)** is a program that can help you get better after a heart attack, heart surgery, a cardiac cath lab procedure, or diagnosis of heart disease. Here's how:

- **In the hospital:** Cardiac rehab therapists help you sit up, walk, do basic exercises, and learn how to take care of yourself at home. They may:
  - Test your heart rhythm
  - Check your blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen, blood glucose, and fluid levels
  - Talk with your doctor about your care
  - Help you care for your incisions
  - Help you manage your medicine
- **After you go home:** You can go to cardiac rehab at an outpatient center near where you live. It may be at the same hospital where you had your surgery or procedure. Most patients go 2 to 3 times per week for several months, or longer.

## What are the benefits?

Cardiac rehab can help you:

- Lower your blood pressure
- Better control cholesterol and blood sugar
- Lose weight or stay at a healthy weight
- Build strength
- Be more active
- Feel better about yourself
- Lower your emotional stress



In outpatient cardiac rehab, you'll build strength and stamina in a supportive, safe setting.

## What are the risks and possible complications?

Cardiac rehab is designed to be safe. Complications are rare. However, cardiac rehab can affect your heart in unexpected ways. Some examples are:

- Abnormal heartbeat or blood pressure
- Limited heart function
- Chest pain
- Heart attack or cardiac arrest

If you have a health emergency during a cardiac rehab session, our staff will be there to help you.

## What can I do instead of outpatient cardiac rehab?

You can follow an exercise plan at home or at a gym of your choice.

## What happens during outpatient cardiac rehab?

The cardiac rehab staff may do several tests to learn more about your condition. You'll work with the team to create a plan that meets your needs. The plan will tell you how often to go to the cardiac rehab center, ways to add activity to your daily routine, and what kind of exercises to do at home.

### Exercise

- **You will be checked for safety, and your progress will be tracked.** As you exercise, cardiac rehab staff will watch your blood pressure, blood oxygen, weight, and exercise ability. You will learn:
  - How to warm up and cool down to reduce strain on your heart and blood vessels.
  - Aerobic exercises like walking on the treadmill or riding an exercise bike. These make your heart pump faster and your lungs work harder.
  - Strength training to build muscle strength and lower your chance of injuries. Strong muscles help keep your heart from working so hard.
  - Balance and coordination exercises for strength and flexibility. These can also help reduce pain, stiffness, and stress on your joints.

### Education

- **You will learn how to make healthier food choices.** Cardiac rehab staff will teach you how to eat to improve your health and reduce your risk of future heart problems. You can also learn how to take off weight safely, and keep it off for life.
- **You will learn how to handle stress and improve your emotional health.** Cardiac rehab staff will teach you how to know when you are stressed and how to relieve it.
- **You will learn other new habits to improve your heart health.**
  - **Quitting tobacco.** Learn strategies to help you quit for good. Connect with support groups and classes, so you aren't going it alone.
  - **Reducing other risk factors.** Small changes in your daily habits can help to better control your blood pressure, diabetes, or heart failure.

### Support

Heart disease can affect your whole life. Cardiac rehab can help you understand what you need to do for better health. Your cardiac rehab therapists will help you find ways to make these changes.

Outpatient cardiac rehab is a fun, positive place where everyone is working on their health and fitness. As you meet other patients, you can help each other reach your goals.



*"I'm glad I did cardiac rehab instead of just trying to go it alone. I've met some great people, and they encourage me every time I go in!"*

– *Ruth, Cardiac rehab patient after CABG surgery*

## Does health insurance cover cardiac rehab?

Generally, cardiac rehab:

- **Done in the hospital** is almost always covered.
- **Done after you leave the hospital** is usually covered if it is prescribed by your doctor. You may still have to pay for co-pays or coinsurance. Talk with your insurance provider to find out what is covered.
- **Done after your recovery** is usually not covered.