

# Your Health after a Heart Attack

You have experienced a heart attack. A heart attack is most often caused by a build up of plaque (a mix of fat and cholesterol) inside your arteries that blocked blood flow to your heart muscle.

To help you recover, stay well, and prevent future heart attacks, you will need an ongoing care plan as well as support from your healthcare team, family, and friends. You may have to make some changes to your lifestyle too.

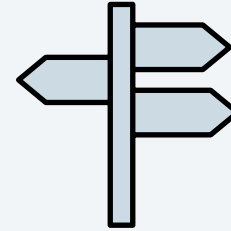
You may feel overwhelmed at times, but taking your care step-by-step will help you feel more in control.



## **EMERGENCY WARNING SIGNS!**

### **Call 911 if you have:**

- Severe chest pain or discomfort
- Sudden shortness of breath
- Fainting or dizziness
- Sudden numbness or weakness in the face, arm, or leg
- Unexplained swelling in legs or feet



## Steps you can follow:



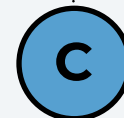
### **Upon DISCHARGE**

1. Know your Care Plan
2. Ask for Support
3. Take your Medications



### **In the FIRST month**

4. Go to your Appointments
5. Have your Tests
6. Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices
7. Communicate with your Care Team



### **After ONE month**

8. Cardiac Rehabilitation and Ongoing Care

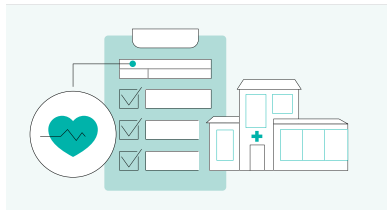


**Use the Care Tracker** at the back of this booklet to record important information about your care plan and heart health.

# Step 1 | Know your Care Plan

Review your care plan with your healthcare team before you leave hospital. Your care plan will help you navigate important steps once you return home.

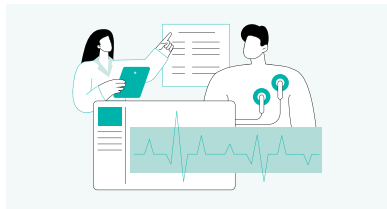
## Your care plan should include:



**Referral to a cardiac rehabilitation program** to help your recovery.



**Prescriptions for important medications** to protect your heart.



**Tests** you will need after you leave hospital.



**Referral to a cardiologist or an internist** for ongoing specialized care.

I had a **heart attack** and had a **coronary angiogram/cardiac catheterization**.

I was treated with: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**TIP:** You can put the details of your procedure here *ie. Which artery/arteries were treated and how many stents.*

**NOTES** \_\_\_\_\_

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## Step 1 | Know your Care Plan *continued*

### BEFORE you leave hospital:

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- Tell your healthcare team **if you do not have a primary care clinician** so they can help arrange follow up.
  - Understand next steps if you do not have a primary care clinician.*
- Have prescriptions for your heart medications** for three months and enough refills for a full year.
- Know your medications** and how to take them.
- Ask about any followup tests and appointments** with your cardiologist or internist and when they will happen.
- Confirm the name and location of the cardiac rehabilitation program** to which you are referred.
- Ensure you understand any **driving restrictions** given by your doctor.
- Understand how to return to **physical activity** safely.
- Know when to call 911** or return to the hospital.

### AFTER you leave hospital:

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- Make an appointment to see your family doctor or nurse practitioner** (or other healthcare provider recommended by the hospital healthcare team) within **2 weeks** of leaving hospital.

**TIP:** As you receive appointments, add the time, date, and contact information to the back of this booklet.

### NOTES

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## Step 2 | Ask for Support

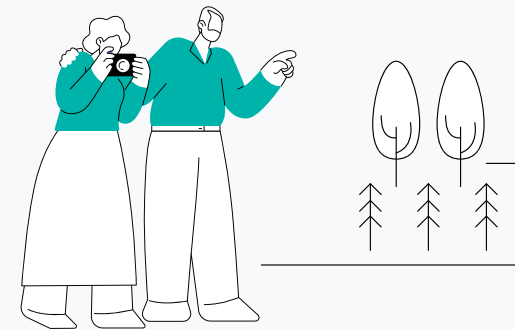
### Your family and friends can help by:

- 1. Supporting your care plan**
  - Taking you to doctor's appointments
  - Keeping track of medications and reminding you to take them
  - Keeping a list of upcoming appointments and tests
- 2. Watching for warning signs**
  - Calling 911 if you experience any emergency warning signs
  - Looking out for changes in your mood such as sadness or withdrawal
- 3. Encouraging healthy lifestyle behaviours**
  - Quitting smoking or vaping
  - Enjoying heart-healthy meals
  - Being active
- 4. Talking about how you are doing**
  - Listening to your concerns about your health or care plan
  - Celebrating your progress

### After you leave hospital:

- Identify at least one person** you can rely on to be a support throughout your treatment and recovery.

**TIP:** Use the Care Tracker at the back of this booklet to write down those that can help support your care plan.



“When I was feeling down, my friends kept reminding me that I needed to keep up with my medications and exercise.”

## Step 3 | Take your Medications

After a heart attack, most people need to take several medications. Taking your medications as prescribed, often for life, will help prevent another heart attack.

- Know which medications you take to:
  - Lower cholesterol
  - Thin your blood
  - Lower your blood pressure
  - Control your blood sugar
  - Relieve pain
- Make taking your medications part of your daily routine so you don't miss a day.

**TIP:** A list of cardiac medications for patients after a heart attack is on **page 13**. Record the medications you are taking and your pill-taking routine there.

“ I have a medication routine in the morning... I have them after breakfast.”

### After you leave hospital:

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- Plan your medication routine:**
  - **When** you will take your medications (Example: in the morning and in the evening)
  - **Where** you will take your medications (Example: in the kitchen)
  - **How you will remember** to take your medications (Example: using a daily pill box or reminder app on my phone)
- Speak to your doctor or pharmacist** if you have questions about your medications and their possible side effects.
- Tell your doctor or pharmacist if medication cost** is a concern.

### QUESTIONS FOR MY DOCTOR or PHARMACIST

Examples: How long should I take my pills for? Can you explain what this pill does?

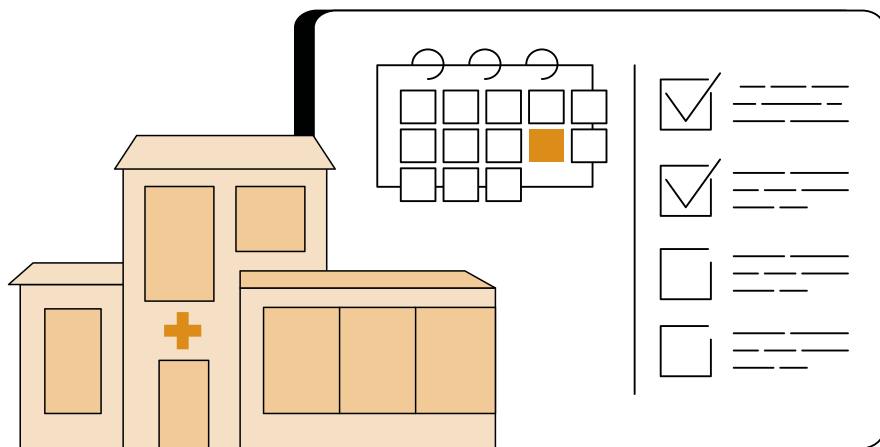
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## Step 4 | Go to your Appointments

Your family doctor or nurse practitioner will provide important long-term follow-up care to support your physical and emotional well-being after a heart attack.

Cardiac rehabilitation is key to a good recovery and includes exercise training, education on heart-healthy living, and counselling. This program usually starts four to six weeks after you leave hospital.



### My Checklist:

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- Make an appointment to see your family doctor or nurse practitioner** (or other healthcare provider recommended by the hospital healthcare team) within 2 weeks of leaving hospital if you have not already done so.
  
- Confirm** your first cardiac rehabilitation appointment.

### NOTES

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## Step 5 | Have your Tests

Your healthcare team may arrange tests before you leave hospital and after you are home to check your recovery and guide your ongoing care.

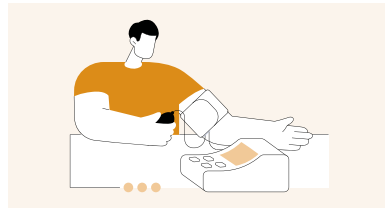
### Tests may include:



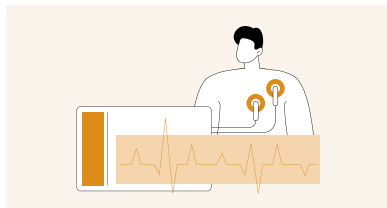
#### Blood tests

*to check on your health:*

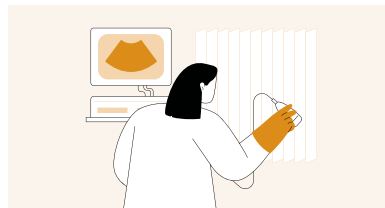
- Tests for high cholesterol and diabetes
- Monitor for any side effects from medications



#### Blood pressure monitoring



#### An electrocardiogram (ECG) to check your heart



#### Heart function tests eg. echocardiogram

### My Checklist:

**Go for any tests booked by your hospital healthcare team:**

Date of first **blood test:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of first **ECG:** \_\_\_\_\_

Date of first **heart function test:** \_\_\_\_\_

### NOTES \_\_\_\_\_

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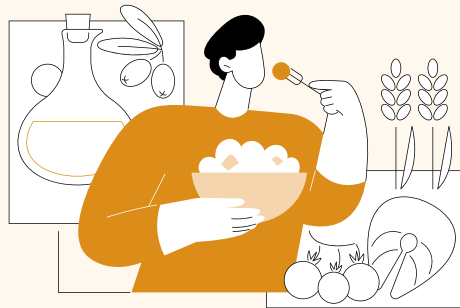
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## Step 6 | Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices

A healthy lifestyle will help your recovery.



Visit [www.ccs.ca/afterheartattack](http://www.ccs.ca/afterheartattack) or use your mobile device to **scan the QR code** to access expert-approved resources to help you complete this checklist.



**REMEMBER:** Following your care plan and having a healthy lifestyle can help prevent future heart events. Use the Care Tracker at the back of this booklet to record important information about your care plan and heart health.

### My Checklist:

- Start light activities**, like short walks or stretching, and exercise as soon as your doctor recommends.
- Check your blood pressure** two to three times a week or if you feel unwell. Record these values in the Care Tracker. Review them with your healthcare team.
- Quit smoking or vaping.** Speak to your doctor for help with cessation.
- Eat heart-healthy foods.** A registered dietitian can help make a plan that works for you.
- Have vaccinations recommended by Health Canada** (e.g., *flu, COVID-19, shingles*)
- Follow any driving restrictions** given by your doctor.
- Talk to your healthcare provider** if you (or your family or friends) are worried **about your mental health.**

## Step 7 | Communicate with your Care Team

Good communication with your healthcare team supports your recovery.



“*I keep a journal of my symptoms and medications. It’s helpful for tracking changes and knowing what to mention to my doctor.*”

### My Checklist:

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- Talk to your healthcare team about:**
  - Your medications and any side effects you’re experiencing
  - Your upcoming appointments
  - Any changes in how you are feeling
  
- Tell your healthcare team **if any appointments or tests have not happened.**
  
- Ask questions** so you understand your condition and the plan for managing it.
  
- Include your family or carers in your recovery process** whenever possible. They can provide practical and mental health support and help you stay organized.

## Step 8 | Cardiac Rehabilitation & Ongoing Care

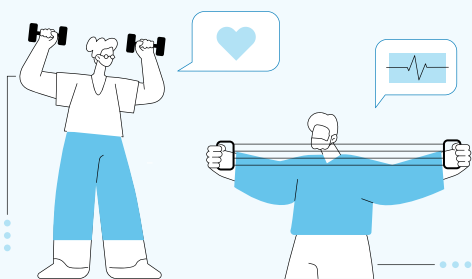
You should begin your cardiac rehabilitation program 4-6 weeks after leaving hospital.

Cardiac rehabilitation will:

- Help you recover from your heart attack
- Prevent you from having another heart event or stroke

Your doctor will refer you to a cardiac rehabilitation program. If you can't access one in your area, ask your health care team about alternative options.

You can also visit [www.ccs.ca/afterheartattack](http://www.ccs.ca/afterheartattack) or scan the QR code to access expert-approved resources.



**DID YOU KNOW?** Cardiac rehabilitation is an exercise-based program that includes education and counselling, guidance on healthy eating, and psychosocial support. It is proven to help people manage their heart conditions and improve their health and quality of life.

### My Checklist:

- See your family doctor or nurse practitioner** (or other healthcare provider recommended by your hospital healthcare team) at least every 3 months for checkups and follow-up care.
- Attend a follow-up appointment with your cardiologist or internist** (usually around 4 to 6 weeks after leaving hospital).
- Participate in your cardiac rehabilitation program** as soon as you can. Tell your cardiologist or internist if you have not received an appointment.
- Confirm any driving restrictions** with your doctor.

“*I was hesitant to join cardiac rehab at first, but now I look forward to it because it shows me how much I can do.*”

## Step 8 | Cardiac Rehabilitation & Ongoing Care

Continue to...

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### Make Healthy Lifestyle Choices

Following your care plan and having a healthy lifestyle can help prevent future heart events.

- Use the Care Tracker** at the back of this booklet to record important information about your care plan and heart health.

- Visit [www.ccs.ca/afterheartattack](http://www.ccs.ca/afterheartattack) or scan the QR code to **access expert-approved resources.**



### Communicate with your Care Team

It's important to continue to ask questions and discuss any concerns about your care as you recover from your heart attack.

- Take a moment to write your thoughts down, discuss them with your loved ones, and take the list to your next appointment.

### Have your Tests & Take your Medications

- Go for scheduled tests.**
- Take your medications as prescribed,** even if you feel better. Talk to your doctor before stopping a medication.
- Call your doctor or tell your pharmacist if you are running out of pills so they can arrange for a **refill.**
- Discuss any concerns** about side effects with your doctor or pharmacist.

# My Care Tracker



Use this tool to record important information about your care plan and heart health.

## Care Team

### Family Doctor/Nurse Practitioner

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/CLINIC \_\_\_\_\_

### Cardiologist or Internist

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/CLINIC \_\_\_\_\_

### Cardiac Rehabilitation Program

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/CLINIC \_\_\_\_\_

### Pharmacist

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/CLINIC \_\_\_\_\_

### Registered Dietitian

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/CLINIC \_\_\_\_\_

### Other

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE/CLINIC \_\_\_\_\_

## Appointments

Date	Healthcare Team Member	Purpose of Visit	Notes

**Identify at least one person** you can rely on to be a support throughout your treatment and recovery.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

# My Care Tracker: Medications

Medication Type	Why do I need to take this?	Examples <i>Check off each of the medications that have been prescribed to you:</i>	Dosage/Instructions
"Anti-platelet"	Prevent clots from forming by making the blood less "sticky," lowering the risk of another heart attack, and protecting your stent. Most patients require some form of an anti-platelet or blood thinner lifelong.	<input type="checkbox"/> ASA <input type="checkbox"/> Clopidogrel (PLAVIX®) <input type="checkbox"/> Ticagrelor (BRILINTA®) <input type="checkbox"/> Prasugrel	
Cholesterol Lowering (Statins and others)	Lowers harmful cholesterol and stabilizes plaque inside arteries to prevent future heart attacks and strokes. This works to protect arteries even if your cholesterol is "normal".	<input type="checkbox"/> Atorvastatin (LIPITOR®) <input type="checkbox"/> Rosuvastatin (CRESTOR®) <i>Additional cholesterol-lowering agents:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> Ezetimibe <input type="checkbox"/> Other	
ACE Inhibitors or ARBs	Protect the heart and blood vessels by lowering blood pressure, reducing scarring, and improving artery health.	<input type="checkbox"/> Ramipril <input type="checkbox"/> Perindopril <input type="checkbox"/> Lisinopril <input type="checkbox"/> Candesartan <input type="checkbox"/> Valsartan <input type="checkbox"/> Losartan	
Beta-Blockers	Reduces stress on the heart by slowing heart rate and blood pressure, lowering the risk of abnormal rhythms and heart failure.	<input type="checkbox"/> Metoprolol <input type="checkbox"/> Bisoprolol <input type="checkbox"/> Carvedilol	
SGLT2 Inhibitor	Protects the heart and kidneys in patients with heart failure or diabetes.	<input type="checkbox"/> Empagliflozin (JARDIANCE®) <input type="checkbox"/> Dapagliflozin (FORXIGA®)	
Nitrates	Relieves chest pain by widening heart blood vessels and improving blood flow.	<input type="checkbox"/> Nitroglycerin Patch <input type="checkbox"/> Nitroglycerin Spray	
Other			

**When will you take your pills?** *Example: In the morning* —————→ \_\_\_\_\_

**Where will you take your pills?** *Example: In the kitchen* —————→ \_\_\_\_\_

**How will I remember to take my pills?** *Example: Use a daily pill box and/or reminder app on my phone* —————→ \_\_\_\_\_



## Recovery Goals

Setting goals keeps you motivated and focused on your recovery. Write down your short-term and long-term goals here:

Short-term goals (FIRST month):

*Quit Smoking*

*Take Prescribed Medications*

Long-term goals (After ONE MONTH):

Health-related goals (exercise, diet, etc.):

Personal goals (mental health, stress management, etc.):

Visit [www.ccs.ca/afterheartattack](http://www.ccs.ca/afterheartattack) or scan the QR code to access expert-approved resources.



### Learn more about:

- Quitting Smoking
- Managing your Heart Health
- Exercising
- Healthy Eating
- Mental Health
- Blood Pressure Monitoring
- Cardiac Rehabilitation
- *And more...*

Visit us at [CCS.ca](http://CCS.ca)



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