



FACT SHEET: Cardiac Rehabilitation and Sudden Cardiac Arrest

Cardiac rehabilitation is a medically supervised program that helps people recover from heart disease and other heart related conditions. Although exercise is the cornerstone of cardiac rehabilitation programs, getting back to an active productive life after a cardiac event requires much more than just resuming regular physical activity. It can be a useful tool in the recovery of a sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) survivor or a patient who has suffered a heart attack, has coronary artery disease, has had a surgical procedure such as a stent, bypass, valve replacement or angioplasty, or another condition that puts a patient at risk of SCA.

Cardiac rehabilitation programs use a multidisciplinary approach to educate participants about the management of individual risk factors. Cardiac rehabilitation participants are encouraged and supported in making lifestyle changes needed to maintain and even improve one's health. The education provided to patients generally centers on nutritional counseling, instructions for safe exercise, introduction to stress management techniques, and specific information on risk factors such as high cholesterol, hypertension, obesity, diabetes, and smoking. Participants are taught how to monitor symptoms and the appropriate actions to take.

Many cardiac rehabilitation programs are housed within hospital or cardiac clinic settings, and have a variety of exercise equipment to help patients build strength and endurance, as well as build good heart health habits to follow outside of the rehab facility. During supervised exercise programs, EKG monitoring is often used to evaluate heart rhythm changes and heart rate response to exercise. Cardiac rehabilitation programs also have the ability to provide individualized instruction and personalized exercise programs to match the needs of the patient.

Cardiac rehabilitation also provides a safe environment where emotions can be dealt with when someone is diagnosed with heart disease or a heart related condition. Fear, anxiety, denial, and depression are common emotional responses to illness and can prevent the individual from returning to previous activities and leading a normal life. With the help of trained professionals, evaluation, and treatment can be initiated to support the healing process. Participants often develop relationships with other members who understand what they are feeling and can provide encouragement and support to help get through the recovery process. Many studies have shown that cardiac rehabilitation provides the emotional support that helps to sustain the physical recovery process. In fact, cardiac rehabilitation programs have recently been shown to help participants live longer compared to those who do not attend cardiac rehabilitation.



Patients generally need a referral from their physician prior to enrolling in a cardiac rehabilitation program, and insurance reimbursement varies by carrier and diagnosis. Cardiac rehab staff can usually assist with questions you might have about billing and eligibility.

Additional information about cardiac rehabilitation and how to find a program in your area is available at from the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program Director at www.aacvpr.org or the American Heart Association at www.americanheart.org/presenter.jhtml?identifier=3047844.

The Sudden Cardiac Arrest Association's mission is to prevent loss of life from sudden cardiac arrest. We seek to increase awareness, encourage training for immediate bystander action, increase public access to defibrillation and promote the use of available medical devices and therapies, principally, implantable cardioverter defibrillators (ICD). SCAA members are the beneficiaries of improved science and medical technology, coupled with the wisdom and caring of thousands of physicians. For more information, please visit us at www.suddencardiacarrest.org