

After a Heart Attack

If you smoke, **quitting is the most important thing** you can do. You can consult your doctor about different methods to quit smoking.

Cholesterol, blood pressure and weight need to be kept under control. Eating more vegetables, whole-grain cereals, fruit, fish and olive oil and avoiding processed meats, red meat, pastries, ice cream and dairy products is very good. If you have **diabetes**, you should try to control your blood sugar level.

Exercise:

Is very important to your return to normal life and to prevent further heart attacks. Start slowly and build up gradually on the basis of your medical test results.

For the first two weeks, walk around the house for 10 minutes a day, then work up to 30 minutes. Next, start walking around outside as you did inside. Slowly increase how long you walk, first on flat ground and later on hills.

Get in the habit of exercising regularly, in keeping with your age and health. Walking, cycling, swimming and running are the best exercise. You need to refrain from strenuous activity, lifting heavy objects or pushing anything heavy, like a car.

Never exercise right after a meal or if it is very cold or windy. You should be able to walk and talk at the same time without panting. Know your limits so you feel good after exercising. If at any time while exercising you feel bad (chest pain, dizziness, shortness of breath, etc.), **STOP**. If the discomfort persists, take nitroglycerin and if need be, go to a medical center.



Stents and medication:

Aside from the basic treatments your doctor recommends, if you have stents (springs that hold the arteries open), you have to take **double antiplatelet therapy** (aspirin plus clopidogrel) for a year and then aspirin alone indefinitely. Under no circumstances should you stop this treatment on your own.

Returning to work:

If your job is not physically demanding or stressful, you can return in 2 months, if your doctor agrees. If your job requires physical effort, going back will depend on your test results (especially the electrocardiogram and stress test).

Sexual activity:

If your test results are normal, you can resume having sex without fear a few weeks after your heart attack (2-3 weeks). Just avoid having sex right after a meal. You may experience impotence if you are afraid of another heart attack or due to your medication. Consult your doctor if you have this problem but do not use Viagra or other drugs on your own.

Driving:

You should wait for 4 to 6 weeks, and avoid long drives.

Traveling:

You can travel to places that are at a similar altitude to where you live. Avoid places at high altitude. It is better to take short plane trips than long trips in other forms of transportation.

Vaccination:

You should get shots for flu and pneumonia.

Serenity:

You will have to find other ways of dealing with life's stresses and worries. Try doing relaxation and deep breathing exercises. If you feel under the weather, see your doctor.