

After a heart attack

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

Cholesterol, blood pressure, and weight must be kept under control. It is therefore highly advisable to eat more vegetables, grains, fruits, fish, and olive oil, and to avoid fats found in cold cuts, red meat, pastries, ice cream, and dairy products. If you have diabetes, it is important to keep your blood sugar under control.

Exercise

This is very important for returning to normal life and preventing further heart attacks. Start with gradual exercise, depending on the results of your medical tests.

For the first two weeks, walk around your house for 10 minutes and gradually increase the time to 30 minutes. Then walk outside as you did at home. Increase gradually, first on flat ground and then on slopes.

Get into the habit of exercising regularly, adapted to your age and health. The best exercises are walking, cycling, swimming, or running. Avoid intense exertion, lifting heavy weights, or pushing something heavy, such as furniture or a car.

Never exercise after meals or in very cold or windy weather. While walking, you should be able to talk without panting. Know your limits so that you feel fine after exercising. If at any point during exercise you feel unwell (chest pain, dizziness, shortness of breath, etc.), stop! If the discomfort does not go away, take nitroglycerin and, if necessary, go to a health center.

Stents and medication

In addition to the treatments prescribed by your doctor to manage cardiovascular risk factors such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes, if you have a stent, which is

similar to a “spring” that opens the arteries, you must take dual antiplatelet therapy for one year, usually aspirin plus clopidogrel, and then continue taking aspirin alone indefinitely. Under no circumstances should you stop this treatment on your own.

Returning to work

If your job does not involve physical exertion or stress, you may return to work two months after being discharged from hospital, in agreement with your doctor. If your job involves physical exertion, returning to work will depend on the results of the tests performed, especially the exercise stress test and the electrocardiogram (ECG).

Sexual relations

If the tests performed are normal, you can resume sexual relations without fear a few weeks after the heart attack (2-3 weeks), but you should avoid doing so after eating. Impotence may occur due to fear of a repeat heart attack or because of the medication. Consult your doctor if you suffer from this problem and do not take Viagra® or other medications on your own.

Driving

Wait 4 to 6 weeks before driving again, and avoid long trips.

Traveling

You can travel to places that are at a similar altitude to your usual place of residence. Avoid going to high-altitude locations. It is better to take short trips by plane than long trips by other means of transportation.

Vaccinations

Flu and pneumonia vaccinations are recommended.

Serenity

Find other ways to deal with life's stresses and worries. Do relaxation exercises and deep breathing. If you feel sad, consult your doctor.

