

Cardiovascular rehabilitation programme

Name

Hospital number

Consultant

Welcome to the cardiovascular rehabilitation programme

Aim of the programme

The cardiovascular rehabilitation programme is designed to help you to manage your condition, and regain your confidence and quality of life. It also focuses on the long-term nature of cardiovascular disease, helping you to come to terms with it and to make changes to your lifestyle. You are welcome to bring a friend, partner or family member to observe you exercising.

Format of the programme

The programme runs for six weeks. Details are below.

St Thomas' Hospital

Tuesday and Thursday mornings, 10am-12 noon

Remember, the cardiovascular rehabilitation course is for you. Please feel free to ask questions.

We know that cardiovascular rehabilitation works best when you attend all of the sessions. If there are parts of the programme you do not think you will be able to attend or do not feel you need, please discuss this with a member of the team. If we are not covering the things that you feel are important, please let us know and we will do our best to meet your needs.

We hope that you enjoy the programme and have fun.

The information sessions

Each week a different topic will be discussed in the information sessions, covering topics on a rotational basis over the six weeks.

Session 1

- Cardiovascular disease and treatments

Session 2

- Introduction to risk factors for cardiovascular disease

Session 3

- Healthy eating and alcohol

Session 4

- Physical activity and exercise

Session 5

- Pharmacist question and answer time

Session 6

- Understanding and managing emotions

The stress management and relaxation component

Your emotional adjustment to a health condition is as important as your physical recovery. Some people experience anxiety or stress following their diagnosis and this may continue in the long term. We aim to help you deal with these problems through learning how to understand and deal with stress. We also run enjoyable practical relaxation sessions.

Over the six-week course, you will learn a variety of different techniques and be offered the opportunity to have individual stress management and support if required.

Excessive and prolonged stress may lead to mental, emotional and physical fatigue, and may contribute to cardiovascular disease. Relaxation offers a mechanism for coping with stress.

As part of your rehabilitation, you will have the opportunity to learn new relaxation techniques and to understand the effects of stress on your cardiovascular system.

Relaxation training can help you to cope with stressful factors or situations in everyday life, allowing you to feel more in control.

Below are just some of the benefits of relaxation:

- reduced muscle tension
- decreased breathing rate and heart rate
- decreased blood cholesterol
- decreased blood pressure
- reduced fatigue and higher energy levels
- better management of stress
- improved sleep
- more self-confidence in maintaining healthy lifestyle changes.

Support time

We have designed the programme so that you will have time to share experiences with others on the course over a cup of tea or coffee. In this way the group provides support and plays a part in your recovery process.

Relaxation tapes and CDs

The cardiovascular rehabilitation team has produced tapes and CDs based on the techniques taught on the course, which you may like to take home with you.

There is no charge but a small donation can be made.

Please ask any member of the team for a copy.

The exercise component

It is normal to feel a little bit anxious about exercise after a hospital admission or new diagnosis. The aim of the exercise component of cardiovascular rehabilitation is to help you regain confidence and physical fitness.

Doing the recommended amount of exercise and physical activity is an important factor in preventing further cardiovascular problems, so we aim to help you enjoy exercise and think about how you will continue with exercising once the cardiovascular rehabilitation programme has finished.

What are physical activity and exercise?

Physical activity is any movement that makes your heart and lungs work a bit harder. It will make you breathe deeper and faster, make your heart beat faster and may cause you to break into a bit of a sweat.

Exercise is physical activity that is structured and purposeful. Exercise that can benefit your health may include brisk walking, cycling, dancing, swimming, tennis, aerobics or badminton. We can give you individual guidance on these options.

Making changes to your lifestyle to increase your general physical activity is as important as structured exercise. Such changes might include:

- taking the stairs instead of the lift
- walking instead of driving for short journeys
- getting off the bus one stop early and walking the rest of the way
- washing the car instead of taking it to the garage
- doing more gardening or housework.

Why is it important to exercise?

Regular exercise can:

- increase the efficiency of your heart and lungs
- lower your resting blood pressure
- help to increase levels of good cholesterol and therefore lower your total cholesterol levels
- reduce your risk of developing diabetes
- improve blood sugar control if you have diabetes
- increase muscle strength and joint suppleness
- increase confidence and your feeling of wellbeing
- help you cope with stress
- help with weight control.

To get the most benefit from exercise, you should do something active five times a week. To maintain fitness, you should exercise for a minimum of 30 minutes at a time (or this can be split into two 15-minute sessions or three 10-minute sessions). If you are physically active less than three times a week, your level of fitness will drop. If you are currently not able to exercise for this duration, you should start by doing just a few minutes a day and then build up gradually.

When you are attending twice-weekly cardiovascular rehabilitation classes, try to do something active at least three other days in the week.

Most importantly, exercise should be fun, so choose types of exercise that you like. If you find it hard to motivate yourself, find someone to exercise with you – you will find it easier to get into a routine and can encourage each other.

How will I know that the exercise is working for me?

You will find that over a short period of time (weeks rather than months) you will be able to exercise for longer periods of time and/or more intensely.

A great way of seeing how far you have progressed over the weeks is to keep an exercise diary. This is simply a record of what exercise you have done, how long you did it for, and how you felt while you were doing it. Over time, you will be able to see how your fitness has improved.

How to progress and monitor your exercise

On the next page there is a scale with which you can rate how hard you are finding any physical activity. Your physiotherapist will explain how to properly use this scale. To get the most health benefits, you should aim for a peak exertion of around 12-13 on this scale. You do not need to exercise above this level, and would probably find it difficult to maintain exercise more vigorous than this for long enough to achieve health benefits.

Perception of exertion scale

6	No exertion at all
7	
	Extremely light
8	
9	Very light
10	
11	Light
12	
13	Somewhat hard
14	
15	Hard (heavy)
16	
17	Very hard
18	
19	Extremely hard
20	Maximal exertion

Borg RPE scale ©Gunnar Borg, 1970, 1985, 1984, 1998

Dos and don'ts of exercise and physical activity

Do:

- Exercise regularly and consistently – fitness is hard to gain, but easily lost.
- Warm up first – start any physical activity gradually. This will prepare your body for being active and reduce the risk of injury.
- Cool down afterwards – keep your feet moving until your breathing is comfortable. This lets your heart rate and blood pressure come back to a resting state gradually, and prevents you from feeling dizzy or unwell.
- Start gently and build up.
- Exercise within your own limits.

Don't:

- Exercise vigorously for at least one hour after a meal.
- Exercise if feeling excessively tired or unwell.
- Continue to exercise if you experience chest pain, nausea, dizziness, unusual joint pain, marked breathlessness, or if you become cold and clammy.

Useful phone numbers

Cardiovascular Rehabilitation Advice Line

t: 020 7188 0946 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm)

British Heart Foundation Helpline

t: 0300 330 3311 (Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm)

w: bhf.org.uk

NHS 111 Helpline

t: 111 (24 hours)

w: 111.nhs.uk

Patient Transport

t: 020 7188 2888

Male Cardiovascular Health Clinic Advice Line – for male sexual problems

t: 07900 224890

British Holistic Medical Association – for relaxation tapes and books

t: 01273 725951

Drinkline – for help and support to stop drinking

t: 0800 917 8282 (weekdays 9am-8pm, weekends 11am-4pm)

Smoking helplines

NHS Smoking Helpline **t:** 0300 123 1044

Lambeth Quitline **t:** 0800 856 3409

Southwark Quitpoint **t:** 0800 169 6002

Guy's and St Thomas' Cardiac Support Group

Affiliated with the British Heart Foundation

- Are you a heart patient?
- Do you need further support?

If so, why not join us? You are most welcome! Feel free to bring your partner or a friend. We normally meet monthly at 7pm in the Cardiac Outpatient Department, 1st Floor, Southwark Wing, Guy's Hospital.

There is also a South London Cardiomyopathy and ICD support group.

For further information about any of the groups above, please speak with a member of the cardiovascular rehabilitation team or call us on 020 7188 0946.

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints)

e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

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A list of sources is available on request