

Advice following a heart attack

Cardiac Support Services

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

This information will help you and your family as you recover from a heart attack.

Your cardiac rehabilitation nurse will go through anything that you do not understand or would like more information about, please do not hesitate to ask any member of the team – we are here to help you.

Medication

Your medications should be checked with you before you go home. You will only be issued with tablets to last two weeks, so will need to go to your GP to get a repeat prescription.

If you are not entitled to NHS free prescriptions, please see the following website for information and advice on financial help.

www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/Healthcosts/Pages/PPC.aspx

www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/ppc

Alternatively, please speak to your pharmacist or call 0300 330 1341 for advice.

Driving

You do not need to tell the DVLA if you've had a heart attack (myocardial infarction) or coronary angioplasty. If you have had successful stenting you are normally allowed to return to driving 1 week after your stent as long as your heart function has been deemed normal. If you did not have a stent fitted or are awaiting further treatment then the DVLA advises you can return to driving 4 weeks after your heart attack. You should always wait until you feel well enough to drive. If you are not sure please contact your healthcare provider to discuss. Alternatively, you can check the latest DVLA guidance at www.gov.uk/heart-attacks-and-driving

You do not need to contact the DVLA unless you drive a large goods vehicle (LGV) or a passenger-carrying vehicle (PCV). If this is the case you will need to notify the DVLA as soon as possible as they will need to assess your fitness to drive.

The DVLA will contact your local hospital to arrange this. Write to the DVLA, Swansea SA99 1TU, or call them on 0300 790 6806. Visit www.gov.uk/contact-the-dvla/y/driving-and-medical-issues for further details. It is important you let your car insurance and annual travel insurance company know that you have had a heart attack.

Returning to work

When you feel ready to return to work it is advisable that you contact your manager to discuss a phased return on light duties to ease your way back in to work gradually. If your job involves heavy manual work then you will need to discuss this with your GP, who will sign you off work if required.

Exercise

You may feel tired when you first go home but this will improve as days go by and as your strength and confidence returns.

Activity is important. Walking is the best exercise for your heart. To begin with, you should aim to walk on the flat at a pace that causes you to feel slightly breathless whilst still able to talk. Whilst you are walking, you should always be able to complete a sentence. Begin slowly and increase your distance and/or effort daily as you feel able. You should avoid pushing yourself to a point where you are gasping for breath.

If you have mobility issues, stay as active as you can. Aim to be able to do what you did prior to your heart attack.

Sexual activity

Sexual activity can be resumed when you and your partner feel ready, as long as you are free of chest pain. Sex is just another form of exercise. You should be fine to have sex if you can walk a mile on the flat in about 20 minutes. Or climb two flights of stairs in 20 seconds.

Chest pain/discomfort

As you have had a heart attack you will find that you are more aware of sensations in your chest, this is perfectly normal. If you experience chest discomfort whilst you are active, you should sit down and keep your feet moving. If you have been prescribed a GTN spray, spray under your tongue and wait for five minutes. If this relieves the pain, just inform your doctor or cardiac nurse next time you see them.

If the pain does not resolve, repeat the spray under your tongue and wait another five minutes. If the pain remains after a further five minutes call 999. If you do not have any GTN, sit down and keep your feet moving, sit calmly, take slow deep breaths and see if the pain stops. **If it does not stop or worsens after 5 minutes, call 999.**

Cardiac rehabilitation service

This is a service to support you once home and to help you recover from your heart attack.

It will also involve a general health check and support to help you reduce your risks of further cardiac events. This may include you attending an 8-week exercise class as well as lifestyle advice.

Service contact details

Cardiac Rehabilitation
Specialist Nurses

01271 311838

The service is available Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

If you need help for minor accidents or unexpected health problems, please call 111 (free of charge from landlines and mobile phones).

They can offer help if you:

- Need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.
- Think you need to go to A&E or need another NHS urgent care service.
- Don't know who to call or you don't have a GP to call when you need health information or reassurance about what to do next.

Further information

For further information, please visit our website at:

www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk

Useful links:

NHS heart attack advice

www.nhs.uk/conditions/heart-attack

For further information, the **British Heart Foundation (BHF)** website (www.bhf.org.uk) has a wealth of information and support regarding your illness, procedures and risk factor advice. They also have a 24 hour helpline available for non-emergency cardiac advice – Heart helpline: 0300 330 3311.

For help quitting smoking – www.nhs.uk/smokefree

For dietary advice – www.bda.uk.com/resource/heart-health.html

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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