

Heart Surgery - Reducing Future Risk Factors

Transcript

Once your surgical recovery is complete, you'll probably feel better than you have in a long time.

In order to continue feeling this good, there are steps you should take to prevent further heart damage. It starts with reducing your risk factors. These are the things that can increase the damage to your heart.

Risk factors include: High cholesterol, smoking and secondhand smoke, an inactive lifestyle, being overweight, diabetes, stress, and high blood pressure.

You can take steps to control each of these. First, talk to your healthcare team about which factors you are most at risk for.

One major risk factor for heart disease is high cholesterol. Cholesterol is the fatty substance that builds up on artery walls, making them narrower.

If your cholesterol is too high, it could be due to heredity and eating too much fat, especially saturated fat.

Changing your eating habits is the first step to lowering your cholesterol. If changing your eating habits alone doesn't help, medications may be prescribed.

Another risk factor is smoking. If you smoke, there are lots of ways to quit. You can taper off gradually. Talk to your provider about nicotine and non-nicotine replacement aids.

You can go it alone, or join a stop smoking group. If you've tried once and have been unable to quit, try again and again until you kick the habit.

Physical inactivity increases your risk for heart disease too, so stay active.

Losing excess weight can help reduce this risk. Following a slow, sensible weight loss plan can also help.

If you have diabetes, manage your blood glucose levels. High blood glucose can damage and clog the vessels of the heart.

If you're under a lot of stress, take steps to control it. Your healthcare provider can counsel you on ways to reduce stress and put you in touch with support groups or counselors who can help.

Another risk is high blood pressure. Although there is no cure for high blood pressure, you can lower it, reducing the possible damage it could cause. Medication can help get your blood pressure under control, and keep it there. Drinking less alcohol can also help.

You can also lower your blood pressure by reducing other risk factors like losing weight, cutting back on the sodium in your diet, and exercising regularly.

In fact, the same goes for most of your risk factors. Reducing one can help reduce others.

Continuing to attend cardiac rehabilitation after you've left the hospital can help you develop these skills. It also provides structured exercise that can improve your heart health. In Cardiac Rehabilitation you'll also work with others with similar goals, providing emotional support and helping you to stay motivated.

Talk to your healthcare team about cardiac rehabilitation programs in your area.

"Although at first it seemed like something 'Oh, I've got to do this, I have to do this,' it's become the time I really look forward to now."

Everyday you're faced with choices that can affect your heart. Try making each one count, even if they may not seem that significant. Don't get discouraged by setbacks and stay committed.

"No matter what age, whether you're in your 40's or in your 70's, you have a new start with this, and now it's up to you to continue."

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