

Keeping Your Heart Healthy

What You and Your Family Should Do



INITIATIVE ON
ACUTE CORONARY
SYNDROME



 **ACP**[®]
American College of Physicians
Leading Internal Medicine, Improving Lives

BRING THIS BOOKLET TO YOUR NEXT DOCTOR'S VISIT.

Getting Started

This guide will:

1. Give you information to help you keep your heart healthy.
 2. Help you talk to your doctor and other members of your health care team - nurses, dieticians and pharmacists.
 3. Encourage you to ask questions.
- 1• Write down your questions and take them to your doctor visit.
 - Have a family member, friend or caregiver with you so that you both can hear the answers.
 - This will help you remember the answers when you get home.



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What Happened To Me?



You were in the hospital because the blood flow to your heart was blocked.

- ☐ Temporary blockage is called: **Unstable Angina.**
- ☐ If the blockage stays blocked too long, part of the heart muscle starts to die. This is called a **Heart Attack.**

(Ask your doctor to check off which one you had.)



The symptoms of unstable angina and a heart attack are similar and include:

- Chest pains that don't go away.
- Chest pains that happen at rest.
- Shortness of breath, sweating, tiredness or upset stomach.

Who should I call if I have questions about what happened in the hospital?

Name: _____

Phone number: _____

Taking Charge

Having had a heart attack puts you at risk for other problems in the future.

- More chest pains
- Heart failure
- Sudden death

YOU CAN TAKE CHARGE of your health to decrease the chance of these happening to you.



To watch short videos on caring for your heart, go to www.acponline.org/patient_ed.

Ask about other local resources to help you care for your heart.

Setting Goals For A Healthy Heart



Reduce Bad (LDL) Cholesterol

- Eat more fruits and vegetables.
- Eat more fish and chicken and less fatty red meats.
- Use “low fat” or skim milk and dairy products.
- Take the cholesterol medicine your doctor has prescribed.
- My goal LDL is:_____.



Control Blood Pressure (BP)

- Don't add salt when cooking.
- Look for 'low salt' on food labels.
- Take the blood pressure medicine your doctor has prescribed.
- Monitor your blood pressure at home.
- My goal BP is:_____.

Keep Blood Clots Away

- Ask your doctor what medicines are best for you.

What More Can I Do To Have A Healthy Heart?



Be More Active and Lose Weight

- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- Park farther away and walk.
- Take a walk after meals.
- Ask your doctor about cardiac rehab.
- My activity goal is: _____
- Write down what you eat and drink.
- Work with your doctor to find 'empty calories' like soda, alcohol and candy.
- Reduce your calories by 250 a day.
- Ask your doctor or nurse about an appointment with a dietician.
- My goal BMI _____.



Control Diabetes

- Ask your doctor how you can bring your blood sugar down safely.
- If you don't have diabetes, ask your doctor to test you for it.
- My goal A1C is:_____.

Stop Smoking

- To help you quit call **1-800-QUITNOW**.
- Visit: www.smokefree.gov.
- Ask your doctor about medicines to help you quit.
- My quit date is:_____.

Medicines For A Healthy Heart

There are different types of medicines to keep your heart healthy:

- Medicines to prevent blood clots. These will help you reduce your risk of a heart attack.
- Medicines to reduce bad cholesterol.
- Medicines to make it easier for the heart to pump.
- Medicines to relieve chest pains.
- Medicines to lower blood sugar to prevent complications from diabetes.
- Medicines to help you stop smoking.



Medicines For A Healthy Heart

My medicines for my heart are:

BLOOD CLOT

CHOLESTEROL

BLOOD PRESSURE

BLOOD SUGAR

SMOKING

OTHER

BRING ALL YOUR MEDICINES TO EVERY DOCTOR'S VISIT.

Questions: _____

Answers: _____

Questions: _____

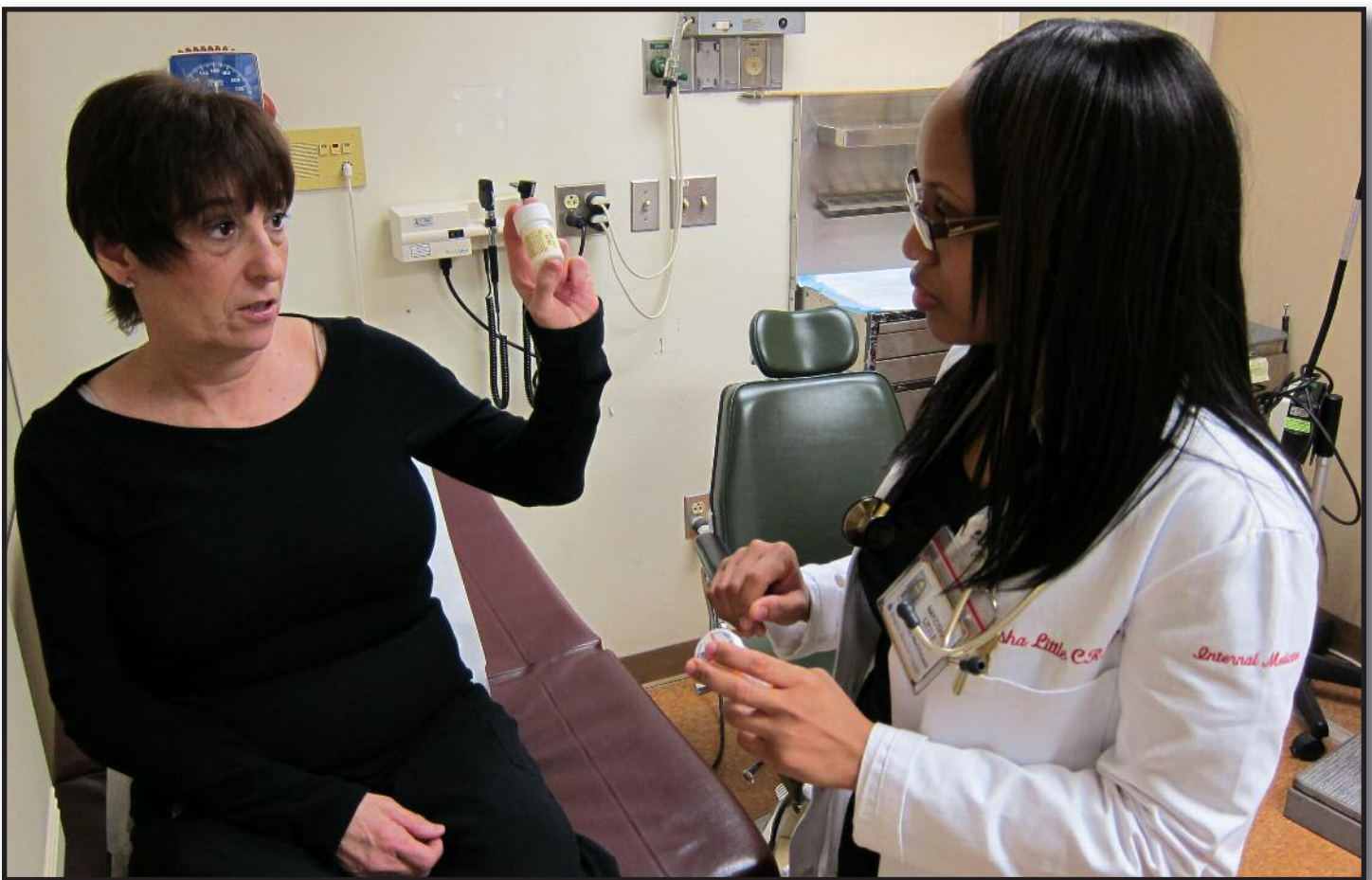
Answers: _____

Taking Your Medicines

Taking your medicines exactly as directed is very important!

If you miss taking your medicines, you may increase the chance of having a heart attack.

Be honest. Tell your doctor if and why you have stopped taking your medicines. Tell your doctor if you are skipping doses.



My question: _____

Answer: _____

Taking Your Medicines

Check off why you stopped or changed your medicines:

- ☐ I do not understand why I'm taking them.
- ☐ I do not understand when I should take them.
- ☐ I have to take them too many times a day and sometimes forget to take them.
- ☐ I don't have a pill box to help me remember to take them.
- ☐ I need help figuring out a way to remember to take them.
- ☐ I have trouble paying for all of my medicines.
- ☐ The medicine makes me feel bad so I don't always take it.
- ☐ I am feeling well and thought I didn't need them.

Other Medicines

Your pharmacist can be an important part of your health care team. Pharmacists know all about your medicines.

Ask questions when picking up your medications. They want to help!



Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking any other medicines. They will make sure the medicines can be safely used together. Not all medicines can be used together.

Over The Counter Medicines And Supplements

- Don't take cold medicines that contain *phenylephrine* and *pseudoephedrine*. These can increase your blood pressure.
- Some anti-inflammatory pain medications like *ibuprofen* or *naproxen* can increase your risk of bleeding as well as your blood pressure. Ask your doctor or pharmacist what is the safest medicine for pain.
- Even aspirin can increase your risk of bleeding.
- Make sure to read all medication labels. **DO NOT** use products that have *ginseng*, *ma huang* or *St. John's wort* in them. **READ ALL LABELS** to avoid these ingredients.



Talk to your doctor or pharmacist before taking any over the counter medicines, supplements, vitamins or herbal remedies.

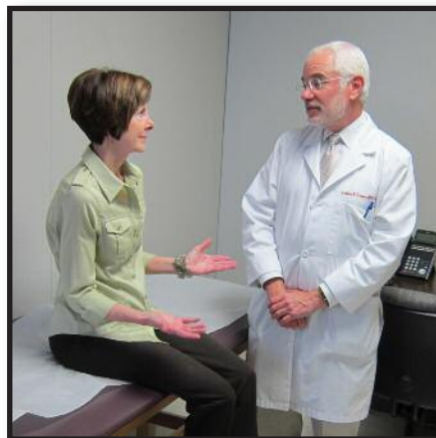
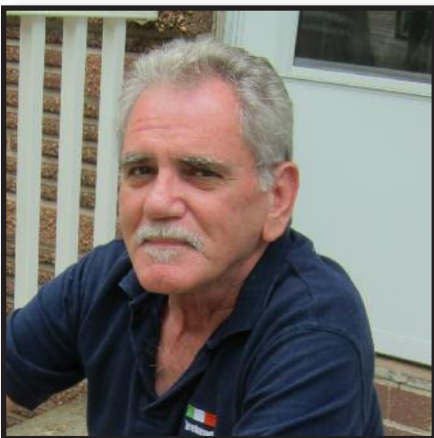
Recovery: Are My Feelings Normal?

Most patients say they have bad feelings after a heart attack. These feelings are normal.

They include:

- Fear of dying
- Fear of more chest pains
- Anger at what happened to you
- Sadness: thinking things like *“I might never be the same again.”* or *“others will think I am weak.”*
- Guilt – feeling like you may be a burden to others
- Sense of failure

Ask your doctor for help if these do not go away after a few weeks.



My question: _____

Answer: _____

Recovery: When Can I Go Back To Work?

Make sure your doctor knows about the type of work you do.

- Most patients can go back in a few weeks.
- Your doctor may do more tests to find out when you're ready.
- Ask your doctor if you should have cardiac rehab.



My question: _____

Answer: _____

Recovery: Do I Need To Limit Activities?

Talk to your doctor about your activity instructions such as:

- Not lifting objects over 10 lbs.
- Avoiding high temperatures such as a hot tub or sauna.
- Avoiding very cold temperatures.
- Reducing stress where possible.



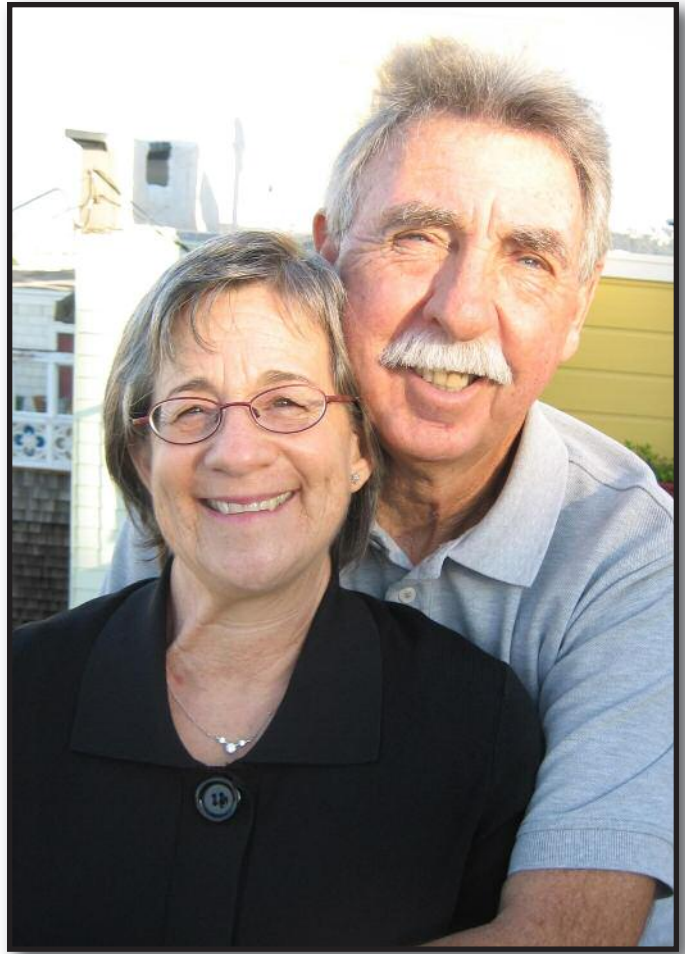
My activity plan:

My question: _____

Answer: _____

Recovery: What About Sex?

- Ask your doctor when it is safe for you to have sex.
- Make sure your doctor is aware of any medicines you are taking for erectile dysfunction. These can cause a bad reaction if you take certain heart medicines like nitroglycerin.
- If you had chest pains the last time you had sex, talk to your doctor.



My question: _____

Answer: _____

Red Zone Symptoms: Call 911

- Cannot catch your breath at rest.
- The symptoms of your prior heart attack (such as chest pain and shortness of breath) are not relieved after taking 3 doses of your nitro medicine under the tongue.
- Dizziness or fainting.
- Cold sweats.
- Racing heart rate or rapid heartbeats not relieved by rest.

THESE SYMPTOMS NEED ATTENTION NOW!

You need to see a doctor right away.

- Call 911!
- Do not drive yourself to the Emergency Room.



The symptoms of my prior heart attack were:

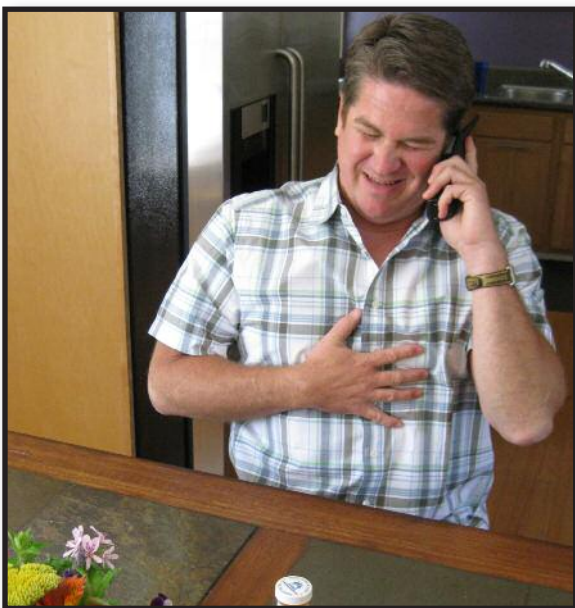
Yellow Zone Symptoms: Call Your Doctor

- Changes in your chest pain such as:
 - It hurts more than usual.
 - You get pains more often than usual.
 - It happens with less activity than before.
 - You need more nitros than usual to take pain away.
- More shortness of breath with your normal activities
- Increased tiredness with normal activities
- Fast heart beats, dizziness or occasional sweats
- Weight gain of 3 pounds over just a few days
- Swelling of legs in a short amount of time

Your medical condition may not be in control.
Contact your doctor.

Doctor's name: _____

Phone number: _____



When you call, tell them
*“My heart symptoms have
gotten worse. I need to talk to
a doctor or nurse right away.”*

Green Zone Symptoms: Things Are Going Well

- You do not have any symptoms that are similar to your heart attack. These include:
 - No chest pain or pressure.
 - No shortness of breath.
 - No extreme fatigue or nausea.
- Your weight is staying about the same.
- You feel OK when you exercise.
- Your heart rate and blood pressure are normal.



Your symptoms are under control. To keep them that way, it is important to:

- Continue taking your medicines as directed.
- Continue to monitor your blood pressure.
- Continue to weigh yourself every day.
- Follow up with your doctors as usual.

Checklist: Before You Leave The Hospital

Follow-up

- ☐ You and the person with you understand the discharge instructions. If you have any questions, ASK!
- ☐ Schedule your follow-up doctor visits for a week or two after discharge. Tell the doctor or nurse if you need help with transportation to get you to the doctor visit.

Medications

- ☐ Have a list of your medicines including any new ones started in the hospital. Make a separate list of any medicines that were stopped.
- ☐ Tell the doctor or nurse if you can't afford to pay for your medicines.
- ☐ Ask the doctor to consider using generic medicines.
- ☐ Call your pharmacy and ask if your medicines are in stock.

Other Services

- ☐ Make sure you have a referral for cardiac rehab.
- ☐ Talk to the doctor or nurse about home care. Ask to speak to a case manager to see if home care is right for you.

Monitoring

- ☐ Tell your doctor and nurse if you do not have a scale. They may be able to help you get one. This is important for weight loss and to monitor for any fluid build-up.
- ☐ Ask about getting a blood pressure monitor to check your blood pressure at home.

Checklist: When You Get Home

Medications

- ☐ Fill all your prescriptions for all new medicines on the day you are discharged.
- ☐ Safely throw away any medicines you no longer need.

Diet

- ☐ Start looking through your kitchen cabinets.
 - Remove items that are high in salt and high in fat.

Monitoring

- ☐ Weigh yourself every day. A rapid increase in weight is a sign of fluid buildup - a sign of heart failure.
- ☐ Take your blood pressure and pulse every day.
 - Consider purchasing an automatic blood pressure (BP) monitor that provides the pulse rate.
- ☐ Write down your numbers and symptoms in this chart.
Use more paper if needed.

	Blood Pressure	Pulse	Weight	Symptoms
Day 1				
Day 2				
Day 3				
Day 4				
Day 5				
Day 6				
Day 7				

Checklist: Your First Follow-Up Visit

Paperwork

- ☐ Before the doctor's visit, call the office to make sure they have received a copy of the:
 - Hospital discharge summary
 - Lab reports or studies that were not complete at discharge
- ☐ Bring this booklet to your doctor's visit.
- ☐ Bring in a written list of questions or concerns.
- ☐ Bring in your hospital discharge instructions.

Medications

- ☐ Bring all your medicines to your doctor's visit.
 - Include any new medicines.
 - Include medicines that were stopped in the hospital.
- ☐ Discuss possible side effects from medicines.

Monitoring and Other Services

- ☐ Ask about cardiac rehab.
- ☐ Bring your blood pressure device to make sure it is working right.
- ☐ Bring your daily records Blood Pressure, Pulse, Weight and Symptoms.

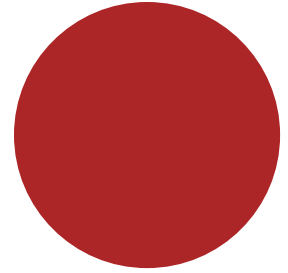
My follow-up visit questions:

Answers:

Important Information

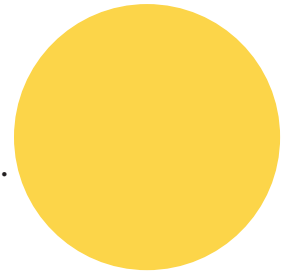
RED ZONE: CALL 911 IF:

- You can't catch your breath at rest.
- Your prior attack symptoms are not relieved after taking 3 doses of nitro
- You feel dizzy, faint or have cold sweats.
- Your racing heart rate or rapid heartbeats are not relieved by rest.



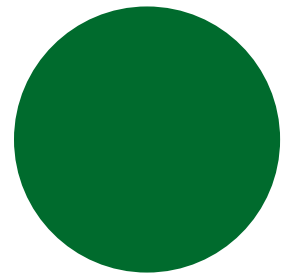
YELLOW ZONE: CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF YOU HAVE:

- More chest pains than usual.
- The need for more nitros than usual to take away pain.
- An increased shortness of breath or fatigue with your normal activities.
- More rapid heart beats, dizziness or occasional sweats.
- A weight gain of 3 pounds over just a few days.



GREEN ZONE: ALL IS WELL. JUST REMEMBER:

- Continue taking your medicines as directed.
- Continue to monitor your blood pressure.
- Continue to weigh yourself every day.
- Follow up with your doctors as usual.



Doctor:

Phone:

Cardiologist:

Phone:

Pharmacy:

Phone:

Specialist:

Phone:

My Stent Information (circle): No Stent

Drug Coated

Bare Metal

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