

# Six steps to cardiac recovery:

Information all cardiac patients should know before leaving hospital

## A GUIDE FOR NURSES TO FACILITATE CONVERSATION

### 1. Explain diagnosis / procedure

All patients should understand their diagnosis and procedure.

- Explain the diagnosis and provide care instructions – do not assume the patient understands what has just happened to them.
- Ask the patient if they have any questions about their diagnosis or procedure.
- Ensure the patient understands that a heart procedure is a treatment and not a cure for heart disease. Often patients do not understand they have a key role to play in managing their heart condition (*see steps 2 to 6 below*).

### 2. Highlight risk factors relevant to the patient

All patients should be familiar with their most relevant risk factors, as well as the importance of managing these to reduce their risk of having another heart event.

- Review the patient's history and discuss the risk factors that are relevant to them.
- Patients are generally not aware that they are at greater risk of another heart event. Discuss clinical risk (e.g. BP, cholesterol) and lifestyle risk (e.g. diet, smoking) factors and the importance of managing these to prevent a future event.
- Explain the value of attending a cardiac rehabilitation program to support the management of risk factors.

### 3. Emphasise importance of cardiac rehabilitation and ensure the patient understands activity and exercise guidelines

All patients should be encouraged to attend a cardiac rehabilitation program.

- Explain the benefits of attending a cardiac rehabilitation program as a key part of recovery.
- Refer the patient to a cardiac rehabilitation program and provide program information.
- Ensure the patient understands how and when to return to everyday activities and exercise.
- Discuss driving restrictions.
- Advise the patient to visit the Heart Foundation website [heartfoundation.org.au](http://heartfoundation.org.au)

### 4. Promote medication adherence

All patients should understand why it is important to take their medication and how to take their medication.

- Check the patient understands the medications they need to take for their heart.
- Emphasise that they must not stop taking their medication.
- encourage them to discuss any concerns with their doctor or pharmacist.

### 5. Educate on warning signs of a heart attack

All patients should know the symptoms/warning signs of heart attack and chest pain management.

- Discuss how to manage their chest pain and instructions for GTN medication.
- Advise that not all heart attacks are the same and that symptoms can vary.
- Encourage patients to learn the warning signs and refer them to the Heart Foundation's warning signs resources (*warning signs included in My Heart, My Life resource and online at [hrt.how/warningsigns](http://hrt.how/warningsigns)*).

### 6. Encourage follow up with doctor

All patients should understand the importance of GP and cardiologist follow up.

- Advise that regular visits with their doctor are essential to help monitor their heart health and medications.
- Encourage patients to discuss any questions about their medication or recovery with their healthcare team.
- Ensure patient has an appointment with cardiologist and GP before leaving hospital.
- Inform the patient about resources available to help them with their recovery. Refer the patient to the Heart Foundation website [heartfoundation.org.au](http://heartfoundation.org.au) and **My Heart, My Life** program.