

World Heart Day 2017: Senior Cardiologist Dr Nilesh Gautam Answers FAQs About Heart Attack Recovery

A Cardiologist Answers Frequently Asked Questions About Heart Attack Recovery

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World Heart Day was created by the World Heart Federation to raise awareness about cardiovascular disease and fight against the disease. The day is observed on September 29 every year to make people aware that they can lower the risk of heart disease by controlling factors like diet and lifestyle. On the occasion of World Heart Day, Senior Interventional Cardiologist, Asian Heart Institute, Dr Nilesh Gautam has answered the frequently asked questions about heart attack recovery.

How long does it take to get back to the normal working routine?

A heart attack is a life-threatening medical condition in which the blood flowing to the heart suddenly stops. Damage to surrounding tissues occurs immediately. Surviving a heart attack ultimately depends on the severity of the condition, as well as how quickly it is treated.

Ease back gradually into your everyday routine so you don't risk a relapse. You may have to modify your daily activities if they are stressful. Your doctor will likely advise you to avoid strenuous physical activities for at least two weeks. After 4 weeks you should be back to your previous working schedule.

What precautionary steps can we take while recovering from a heart attack?

There are steps you can take to recover from a heart attack and prevent another one from happening in the future. This is known as secondary prevention. Understanding the risk factors and their control can prevent further episodes. Control the blood pressure, diabetes and cholesterol with medicines as prescribed by your doctor and do regular cardio exercise which makes the heart stronger.

What kind of lifestyle changes is important to make?

Stop tobacco and alcohol consumption in any form. Regular exercise, at least 30 min of cardio, with yoga and meditation will help. Avoid doing heavy weight training.

What is cardiac rehabilitation?

Cardiac rehab doesn't change your past, but it can help you improve your heart's future. It's a medically supervised program designed to help improve your cardiovascular health if you have experienced a heart attack, heart failure, and angioplasty or heart surgery. Cardiac rehab has three equally important parts.

Exercise, counseling and training: Exercise gets your heart pumping and your entire cardiovascular system working. You'll learn how to get your body moving in ways that promote heart health.

Education for a heart-healthy living: Managing your risk factors, choosing good nutrition, quitting smoking and education about heart-healthy living is a key element of cardiac rehab.

Counseling to reduce stress: Stress hurts your heart. This part of rehab helps you identify and tackle everyday sources of stress.

How to follow a heart-healthy diet?

The food you eat affects your blood flow. A diet that is high in "bad" fats (saturated and trans fats) can cause buildup (plaque) in your arteries. Plaque slows or prevents blood flow to your heart. Over time, it can block your arteries and can cause a heart attack or heart failure. Add foods to your diet that are low in cholesterol and saturated fats. Eat more fruits and vegetables. Eat less red meat, and more white meat and fish. Consume fewer high-fat dairy products. Cut down on salt (sodium) and sugar. Avoid fried and processed foods.

What about the sex life after a heart attack?

Sex is part of a healthy life and part of your quality of life. It is safe for most people after they have had a heart attack. After a heart attack, you can resume sexual activity when you are healthy and feel ready for it. You could be ready if you can do mild or moderate activity, like brisk walking, without having chest pain.

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