

# THE BENEFITS OF CARDIAC REHABILITATION



**A SUDDEN CARDIAC ARREST – OTHERWISE KNOWN AS A HEART ATTACK** – can be a dramatic medical emergency for the patient and his friends and family. It is, after all, a matter of life and death: a situation where the patient is pulled back from the brink of death by the immense efforts of the emergency staff and cardiologist. After such an ordeal, patients often find themselves in shock, losing self confidence in their ability to return to a “normal” life.

Cardiac rehabilitation is a medically-supervised programme that helps improve the physical health and mental well-being of patients who suffer from heart problems, such as those recovering from a heart attack or heart surgery and survivors of sudden cardiac arrest. With the goal of helping patients return to a quality of life that they were used to, the programme adopts a holistic and multidisciplinary approach to help the patient adopt a healthy life for their heart.

The main aims of any cardiac rehabilitation programme is to help patients improve weight control, adopt a healthier diet, begin an exercise programme, stabilise their blood pressure and kick any bad habits that they may have (such as excessive drinking or smoking). Doctors, nurses, exercise physiologists, psychologists and dieticians are involved in the rehabilitation of the patient, ensuring that every aspect of the patient’s life is looked into and improved.

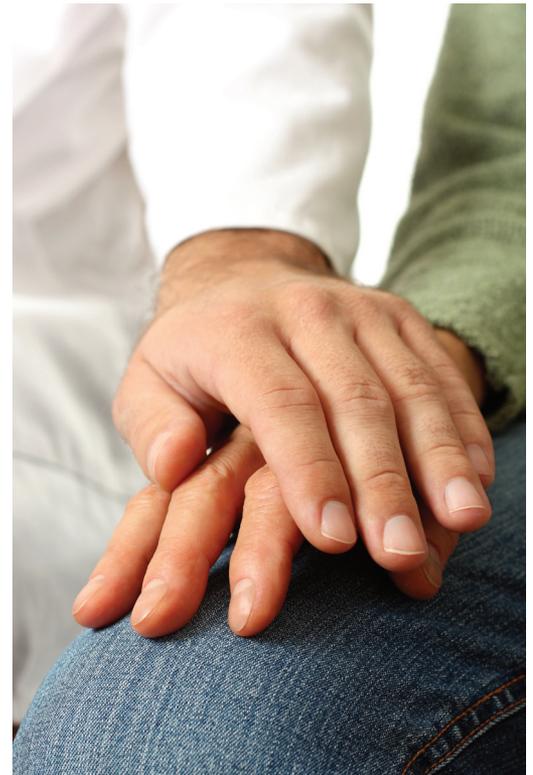
It has been shown that patients who go through cardiac rehabilitation programmes tend to be better committed to long-term treatment and have improved functional capacity in their day-to-day activities. They are also less likely to be re-admitted into the hospital in the near future and not as likely to pass away as a result of heart problems.

There are two main types of rehabilitation programmes available to patients: group programmes and home programmes. While home programmes tend to be less disruptive to a patient’s life, the social support offered by the group programme is invaluable; group rehabilitation is associated with a 25% reduction in cardiac death and morbidity.

Having served as a director for cardiac rehabilitation programmes where I have had the pleasure of getting to know many of my patients personally. One of the most common concerns I’ve heard from my patients

is: How long must they wait after a heart attack before they can resume their regular activities like driving, work and sexual intercourse?

In most cases, the patient can resume such activities within a week. However, it should be noted that sexual enhancers like Viagra should always be avoided if they are on concomitant nitrate therapy and should never be used within 24 hours of nitrate use. ■



## DR ERIC HONG

MB BCh (Ireland), MRCP (UK), FAMS (Cardiology) DIP  
CCNC (USA), FACC, FSCAI, FESC, FRCP

EH Heart Specialist

3 Mount Elizabeth #03-09 Mount Elizabeth Medical Centre Tel: 6736 1068  
www.eheartspecialist.com