

# Road to Recovery

## Your 1st week after a heart attack

### DAY 1 – GETTING ORGANIZED

- Immediately contact your cardiologist office or nurse navigator if you were not able to obtain all your discharge medications.
- Review your hospital discharge papers and take note of any scheduled appointments.
- Review your heart attack action plan (green, yellow, red form).
- Look at your medication list and create a system to organize your pills (a pillbox, daily alarms, labeling pill bottles, your written list and/or a calendar may be helpful).
- If you still have the dressing on your wrist or on your groin area, remove it. Bruising and tenderness are normal, but it should feel soft. Avoid heavy lifting (no more than 10 pounds) or strenuous activity for the first 5 days.
- Write down your weight, blood pressure, heart rate and how you are feeling today on a calendar and remember to bring this form to your first office visit.
- Stop smoking. Request and encourage others not to smoke around you. This will cut your risk of heart disease in half!



- **Report any weight gain of 2+ pounds per day or 5+ pounds per week.**
- **Report signs of infection (warmth, pain or drainage at angiogra access site).**

### DAY 2 – LOOKING FORWARD

- List questions you want to ask at your follow-up (i.e. when can I have sex? Can I have alcohol?). Write down 2 goals for improving your health. Share them with others and designate an accountability partner within your support system to help you.
- Contact your provider or nurse navigator for any new or unusual symptoms.

## DAY 3 – TAKING IT ALL IN

Today you may be experiencing a flood of emotions as you come to terms with the fact that you just had a heart attack. You are not alone, and your feelings are nor

**Fear** What if I can't work?  
Was this my fault?  
Can I still have sexual activity?  
What if I have another heart attack?  
Will people look at me differently?  
Is it normal to feel tired?

**Anger**

At yourself  
At your family  
At your job

**Depression**

Will this change my future?  
Will I ever be the same?  
Will others see me as weak?  
Is there any point in making changes now?

## DAY 4 THROUGH 7 – PUT A PLAN IN MOTION

- By now you should have scheduled and/or completed follow-up visits with both your cardiologist and your primary care provider.
- Take your medications as prescribed.
- Enroll and participate in cardiac rehabilitation.
- Get support and don't be afraid to ask for help. Join a support group and share your recovery process with friends and family.
- Manage your risk factors – begin to take action.
  - Nutrition, cholesterol, blood pressure, weight, diabetes.
  - In individuals who drink alcohol, the recommendation is at most 2 drinks daily for men and at most 1 drink daily for women.
  - Stress management: identify healthy habits such as exercise, listening to music, pet therapy, or a hobby.
  - Exercise is also a great way to begin to take action as it helps all of your risk factors start heading in a healthy direction.
- Educate yourself from a reliable resource.
  - Pulse Heart Institute has information and patient education videos to assist with your journey to better health. Scan the QR code on the first page to go directly there.
  - Pulse Nurse Navigators are a resource designed strictly to assist with your path to recovery: please work closely with your navigators.

The road to recovery is a one way trip and we are here to guide you every step of the way.

Connect with others through the  
American Heart Association  
[supportnetwork.heart.org](https://supportnetwork.heart.org)

