

Discharge advice after a heart attack

Information for patients

This leaflet provides advice to support you after a heart attack. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to speak to the team caring for you.

On the ward

Once you are off the cardiac monitor you can walk around the ward and take a shower. Please do not leave the ward until you have had the results of your heart scan (ECHO).

Make sure you have used the stairs before you leave. If you are nervous about this a nurse can observe you. You are usually in hospital for two to three days, so it is important to move around so that you feel well enough to be discharged.

Medicine

You will be given medicine which you may need to take for the rest of your life. Blood thinning medication is particularly important. Your medications should be checked with you before you go home.

Please ensure you do not run out of medication at home as missing even one day can result in your treatment being less successful. You will only be issued with two weeks of tablets, so you will need to go your GP (home doctor) to get a repeat prescription.

If you are not entitled to free NHS prescriptions, pre-payment certificates can help cover the cost. You can obtain these on a 3 monthly and 12 monthly basis and can pay by debit/credit card or direct debit.

Please speak to your pharmacist about pre-payment certificates or call 0845 850 0030 for further advice. Visit www.nhsbsa.nhs.uk/help-nhs-prescription-costs for more information.

Driving

When you return to driving will depend on the result of your heart scan (ECHO) and whether your heart attack was complicated or not.

You do not need to contact the DVLA or Carriage Office unless you drive a large goods vehicle (LGV) or a passenger-carrying vehicle (PCV). If this is the case, you will need to

notify the DVLA or Carriage Office as soon as possible as a special 'Exercise Test' is often needed. The DVLA or Carriage Office will tell you what is needed.

For more information visit www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions or 0300 790 6806.

It is also important you let your insurance company know that you have had a heart attack.

Returning to work

A heart attack does not generally stop you from returning to work. Advice is specific to the type of work you do, and most people return to work by 4 weeks.

You will need to contact your GP as soon as possible to arrange sickness certificates to give to your employer.

If you are unemployed or self-employed you may need to enquire about benefits and allowances. Your local Jobcentre Plus Office and Citizens Advice Bureau will be able to advise.

For more information, please read the British Heart Foundation booklet 'Work with a heart condition' by scanning the QR code or visiting www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/practical-support/work-and-a-heart-condition



Exercise

You may feel tired when you first leave the hospital but this will improve as days go by and as your strength and confidence improves.

Activity is important and walking is the best exercise for your heart. Try 5 to 10-minute walks at first and increase daily as you can. Your goal by the end of four weeks should be to walk at moderate intensity (feeling slightly out of breath but able to talk and feeling mildly hot and sweaty) for 30 minutes.

If you have mobility issues stay as active as you can. Shopping, laundry, light housework, light gardening and keeping up low to moderate intensity hobbies are encouraged.

Sexual activity

It is safe to resume sexual activity whenever you and your partner feel ready. If you can walk and manage your everyday activities, you are safe to resume your sex life. As with any activity again, start slowly.

Erectile dysfunction problems may occur and become concerning to you. Please don't be embarrassed and do discuss this with your nurse or doctor.

Chest pain

You may still experience some chest aches or pains after you go home and they can cause anxiety. If aches or pains come and go rapidly and you can easily distract yourself from them, they are usually nothing to be concerned about. It is normal to be more aware of sensations around the chest area for the first month or so after a heart attack.

If you do experience chest pain that does not resolve immediately you should stop what you are doing and sit down and rest.

If you have your glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray, you can spray it under your tongue and wait five minutes. If the pain does not ease take a second dose and wait another 5 minutes. If you still have chest discomfort call 999 straightaway.

If you do not have any GTN spray, sit calmly and see if the pain stops. If it continues after 10 minutes call 999.

Cardiac rehabilitation

Cardiac rehabilitation is a programme to support you once you leave hospital and helps you recover from your heart attack. It involves a general review of your health and risk factors that may have led to your cardiac event, education, relaxation and exercise classes.

You may see a cardiac rehabilitation nurse before you leave the hospital, however if you are not seen before you are discharged from King's we will send your details to your local hospital.

Your local cardiac rehabilitation team (based on GP) will then contact you about classes near to you and can offer advice and support. If you are an overseas patient, you will need to check with your own local services if this is available for you and how you can get referred.

For more information about cardiac rehabilitation, access the British Heart Foundation information booklet by scanning this QR code or visit www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications/treatments-for-heart-conditions/understanding-cardiac-rehabilitation



Outpatient follow-up

Outpatient follow-up will be organised by the cardiology secretaries. You should receive a letter in the post or via MyChart within a couple of weeks of leaving the hospital.

If you don't receive one, please contact the cardiology secretaries with your query, date of birth and hospital number via kch-tr.cardiologysecsgeneral@nhs.net

Further information

Understanding a heart attack information booklet (British Heart Foundation): www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/publications/heart-conditions/understanding-a-heart-attack



Who can I contact with queries and concerns?

- Cardiac Health and Rehabilitation Team
 - Tel: 020 3299 3495 (available Monday to Friday, 9 am to 5 pm)
 - Email: kch-tr.cardiacrehab@nhs.net
- Sam Oram Ward
 - Tel: 020 3299 5164 (available 24 hours a day)
- Victoria and Albert Ward
 - Tel: 020 3299 4288 (available 24 hours a day)
- For medicine queries please contact the ward that discharged you
- British Heart Foundation
 - Heart Helpline 0808 802 1234
 - www.bhf.org.uk
- Your GP

MyChart

Our MyChart app and website lets you securely access parts of your health record with us, giving you more control over your care. To sign up or for help, call us on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.mychart@nhs.net. Visit www.kch.nhs.uk/mychart to find out more.

Sharing your information

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust has partnered with Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust through the King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas' hospitals. King's College Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trusts share an electronic patient record system, which means information about your health record can be accessed safely and securely by health and care staff at both Trusts. For more information visit www.kch.nhs.uk.

Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our nursing students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams.

Tel: **020 3299 4618**

Email: kings.pals@nhs.net

If you would like the information in this leaflet in a different language or format, please contact our Interpreting and Accessible Communication Support on 020 3299 4618 or email kings.access@nhs.net