

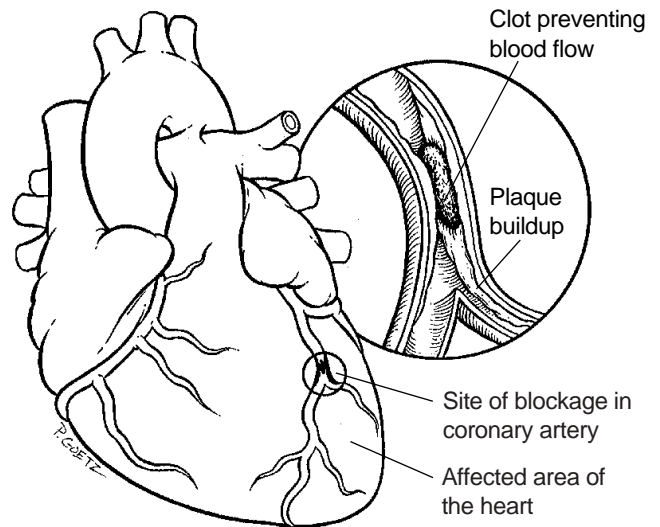
# How will I Recover from My Heart Attack?

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There's good news for people who have had a heart attack. The worst is over, and soon you can do most of the things you used to do!

Now is a good time to make healthy changes in your lifestyle. Heart disease can get worse unless you take steps to get your heart in good shape.

After a heart attack, it's common to worry a lot. Getting better and feeling good about yourself will take time. It helps to do as your doctor says and to learn about keeping your heart healthy. You may have many active years left to enjoy!



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## Are my feelings normal?

Most patients say they have bad feelings after a heart attack. These are normal and easy to understand. It's a good idea to talk to someone about your feelings — don't keep them inside. In time, these bad feelings should go away.

### Fear:

- of dying
- of chest pains
- that you can't have sex
- that you can't work

### Anger:

- that it happened to you
- at family and friends

### Depression, such as thinking...

- "Life is over."
- You might not be the same again.
- Others might think you are weak.

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## How will my family feel?

People who are close to you will also "feel" your heart attack. Instead of keeping bad feelings in, you should all talk about them. Family members may feel...

- Frightened to see you in the hospital.

- Angry that the heart attack came at a bad time.
- Guilty because they think they "caused" it, even if they know it's not possible.

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## What changes should I make?

- Get help to quit if you smoke.
- Control high blood pressure.
- Eat healthful meals low in saturated fat, cholesterol and salt.
- Get involved in regular physical activities.
- Lose weight if you need to.
- Take your medicine exactly as prescribed.

## What about sex?

- Check with your doctor first, but you should be able to have sex the way you did before. You should be ready when you're able to walk around easily.
- If you have chest pain during sex, have lost interest, or are worried about having sex, talk with your doctor.

## When can I go back to work?

- Most people go back to work in 2 weeks to 3 months.
- Your doctor may have you take tests to find out if you can do the kind of work you did before.
- Some people change jobs to make it easier on their heart.
- Ask your doctor about cardiac rehabilitation programs in your area.

## How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit [americanheart.org](http://americanheart.org) to learn more about heart disease.
3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at [StrokeAssociation.org](http://StrokeAssociation.org).

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

## What are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke?

### Warning Signs of Heart Attack:

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

### Warning Signs of Stroke:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

## Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

Can I play sports? \_\_\_\_\_

What if I stay depressed? \_\_\_\_\_

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