



Heart Rehab Promotes Healthy Habits

Rehabilitation after heart disease encourages healthy lifestyles

By: [Deanna Morey](#) (/about-us/content_team.html)

Reviewed By: [Joseph V. Madia, MD](#) (/about-us/content_team.html)

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(dailyRx) For patients with heart disease, a heart rehabilitation program may do more than better their physical health. Such programs also appear to work by promoting healthy lifestyle decisions.

Patients that take part in heart rehab appear to make better choices about healthy eating and living a healthy lifestyle, helping prevent future cardiovascular events.

Ask your cardiologist if you could benefit from heart rehab.

María Esther Sánchez Entrena, lead researcher and a member of the physiology department of the University of Granada School of Pharmacy in Spain, said that heart rehabilitation helps enhance certain risk factors for heart disease while encouraging patients to have healthy eating and life habits, which is essential for preventing heart disease.

In Spain a low percentage of patients participate in heart rehab programs as compared to the rest of Europe.

During the study, 200 Spanish patients suffering from heart disease who were members of the Association of Cardiac Patients of Granada were enrolled. Participants were assigned to one of two groups.

The intervention group participated in a heart rehabilitation program conducted by the association, while the other group received traditional aftercare but was excluded from the program.

Participants from both groups underwent a clinical functional study and answered a survey about risk factors associated with heart disease.

Investigators found that patients who participated in cardiac rehab had lower total cholesterol and triglyceride levels as compared to the group that did not receive intervention. In addition, rehabilitation participants exhibited healthier eating habits and exercised more regularly than participants in the other group.

Researchers said the findings show that it is essential that additional heart rehabilitation programs aimed at cardiac patients are established.

The preliminary results of the study have been published in the journal *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism*.

Coronary Artery Disease

Coronary artery disease is the leading cause of death in the United States and in the rest of the world. Estimates point to almost one half of all middle aged men and one third of all middle aged women in the United States developing some form of CAD. The primary symptom of angina, commonly known as chest pain, occurs when the artery is almost completely blocked.

Plaques made up of cholesterol and fibrous tissue lodge in the walls of the arteries that supply blood to the heart. Slow growth of the plaques can cause chest pain as they restrict blood flow to the heart muscle, and complete closure or rupture of the plaque can cause a myocardial infarction, commonly known as a heart attack, with resulting disability or death. CAD is primarily a disease of diet and habits, with the greatest risk factors coming from smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes.

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