

Controlling Your Risk Factors After Bypass Surgery



Managing coronary artery disease

After surgery, the blood flow to your heart is better. But bypassing the blockages does not cure the disease. New blockages can still form. You need to take steps to prevent this. By taking care of your risk factors for coronary artery disease (heart disease), you can help keep new blockages from forming. This will lower your chances of needing more coronary treatments. This may include another bypass surgery.

Controlling risk factors

To manage heart disease, you must control as many risk factors as you can. Work with your healthcare provider to identify your risk factors and to get them under control.

Your healthcare provider will work with you to change lifestyle factors as needed to help stop your heart disease from getting worse. Factors you may need to work on include:

- Diet
- Physical activity
- Weight management
- Smoking cessation
- Stress management

Learn more below about managing these factors.

Diet

Your healthcare provider will give you information on dietary changes that you may need to make. They may advise that you see a registered dietitian for help. Changes may include:

- Lowering your fat and cholesterol intake
- Eating less saturated fat and trans fat
- Eating less sodium (salt), especially if you have high blood pressure
- Eating more fresh vegetables and fruits
- Choosing frozen vegetables instead of canned, which can be very high in salt
- Eating lean proteins, such as fish, poultry, and legumes (beans and peas)
- Eating less red meat and processed or canned meats
- Using low-fat dairy products
- Using vegetable and nut oils in limited amounts
- Limiting processed foods such as chips, cookies, ready-made microwavable meals, and baked goods
- Limiting foods with sugar
- Limiting alcohol, which your body breaks down into sugar

Physical activity



Your healthcare provider may advise that you get more physical activity. You should be as active as possible. Your provider will tailor the advice to your own limits and needs. For example, they may advise that you do moderate to vigorous physical activity for at least 30 minutes each day, at least 5 days per week. But don't start until your provider tells you it's OK to do so. They may want you to go through cardiac rehab. A few examples of moderate to vigorous physical activity are:

- Walking at a brisk pace, about 3 to 4 miles per hour
- Jogging or running
- Swimming or water aerobics
- Hiking
- Dancing
- Martial arts
- Tennis
- Riding a bike or stationary bike

Weight management

If you are overweight or obese, your healthcare provider will work with you to help you lose weight and lower your body mass index (BMI) to a normal or near-normal level. Making diet changes and exercising more can help.

Eating foods that are fresh, unprocessed, and low in sugar and bad fats can help you control calorie intake and achieve a healthier weight.

Controlling your weight reduces the risk of sleep apnea and snoring. Snoring and sleep apnea can cause increases in stress hormones and blood pressure. It can cause daytime sleepiness and headaches. It can be hard to be active without good sleep. And sleep apnea and snoring can lead to artery wall stress and can cause a heart attack or stroke.

Smoking cessation

If you use tobacco in any form, you should stop. This includes cigarettes, electronic cigarettes, a vape pen, and smokeless tobacco. Use of these products are bad for your arteries and your lungs. Work with your healthcare team to find a program that will help you stop. You should also avoid secondhand smoke. Avoiding all tobacco and smoke can reduce the risk of a heart attack, stroke, and cancer.

Stress management

Managing stress is another vital part of a heart-healthy life. High levels of stress can lead to a higher heart rate and blood pressure. These both cause stress to the heart muscle and to artery walls. Find activities you enjoy that help you cope with stress. Some examples are gardening, walking, deep breathing exercises, yoga, or doing volunteer work. Some cardiac rehab programs can help you learn to ways to reduce your stress by using relaxation methods to relieve muscle tension. These include meditation and biofeedback. Talk with your provider about ways to reduce stress that may help you.

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