



## HEALTHY HEART = HEALTHY AGING



As individuals age, the need for services and activities to support a better quality of life continue to increase.

When it comes to the heart health of older populations, there are key elements and lifestyle changes that when properly followed can support healthy aging. Depending on each individual's situation, these lifestyle changes may require the support of a healthcare professional such as a therapy team.

**Practice Physical Activity:** Whether you attend a fitness class or go for a walk, getting a daily dose of physical activity keeps you strong and focused. In fact, research shows that maintaining a higher level of leisure-time physical activity in adulthood can lower the risk of mortality.

**Know Your Health Status:** A simple yet very effective of practicing self-care is keeping up with your blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels. These numbers are very important to maintain balanced in order to support your heart health.

**Follow a Balanced Diet:** A healthy diet that is low in sodium and saturated fat is key to heart disease prevention.

**Maintain a Healthy Weight:** being overweight increases your risk of having heart disease. Choosing heart-healthy foods and getting regular exercise will help you achieve and maintain a healthy weight.

**Manage Stress:** Practicing meditation, being more physically active, doing relaxation therapy, and talking with someone you trust can help you cope with stress and sleep better.

**Listen to Your Physical Therapist:** As part of the interdisciplinary team (IDT), physical therapists can help gain and maintain movement and preserve independence, often without the need for surgery or long-term use of prescription drugs.

Change is not always easy, but when it comes to you health and the health of your heart, it is necessary. For more information and tips for healthy aging, access the links below.

### Informative Articles and Resources

[Self-Care Tips for Heart Health – NHLBI](#)

[Association of Leisure-Time Physical Activity Across the Adult Life Course With All-Cause and Cause-Specific Mortality – JAMA](#)

[Taking Care of Our Hearts, Together – NHLBI](#)

[Physical Therapists Help You Overcome Barriers to Physical Activity – APTA](#)

[Stress Less for a Healthier Heart – NHLBI](#)

## American Heart Month: Awareness & Action

February is a perfect month to remind us that in all stages of life, it is important to take care of our hearts.

Research shows that while adults are living longer, heart disease is prevalent in the growing aging population. Some factors that affect individuals and their ability to function and manage their disease well include existing co-morbidities, along with cognition, sleep, physical balance and strength.



- Heart disease is the leading cause of death for men, women, and people of most racial and ethnic groups in the United States.
- 14.2% of adults aged 45 years and older reported having coronary heart disease (CHD), a stroke, or both.
- 9.6% of adults aged 45 to 64 years reported being diagnosed with CHD, or a stroke, or both compared with 21.7% of adults aged 65 years and older.
- In the United States, someone has a heart attack every 40 seconds.



**Did you know?** As the leading cause of death in the United States, heart disease takes the lives of nearly 650,000 Americans each year, and 1 in 9 adults have been diagnosed with this condition ([source](#)).

### Take it to Heart

When it comes to heart health, physical activity is a great way to promote self-care and a healthy lifestyle. Proper nutrition, sleep and stress management are also elements needed to support heart health. Other beneficial actions include:

- Taking medications as prescribed and keeping medical appointments
- Sleeping 7-8 hours a night
- Practicing yoga or other calming activities
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Keeping up with your blood pressure, blood sugar and heart rate
- Having a support system

### Informative Articles and Resources

[Coronary Heart Disease, Myocardial Infarction, and Stroke—A Public Health Issue – CDC](#)

[About American Heart Month: Ways to Get Involved – NHLBI](#)

[Heart Health Resources – NHLBI](#)

[COVID-19 and the Heart – NHLBI](#)

[Heart Disease: It Can Happen at Any Age – CDC](#)

[Heart Health Fact Sheets – NHLBI](#)

## CLINICAL HIGHLIGHT: CARDIAC REHAB

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is one of the leading causes of death worldwide and is the leading cause of death in the United States.

In support of patients with heart conditions, Cardiac rehabilitation (CR) is a complex, interprofessional intervention customized to individual patients with various cardiovascular diseases.

- CR programs provide supervised exercise training in conjunction with other secondary prevention interventions.
- The programs are designed to speed recovery from acute cardiovascular events.
- CR also benefits patients with stable coronary heart disease and symptomatic peripheral arterial disease.
- Recent scientific studies have shown that people who complete a cardiac rehabilitation program can increase their life expectancy by five years.



The primary goal of CR is to enable the patient to achieve optimal physical, psychological, and social functioning through exercise training and lifestyle change. In fact, evidence demonstrates that participation in early outpatient CR results in a reduction of all-cause mortality, cardiac mortality and readmission rates to hospital, as well as an improved quality of life.

Despite the improvement in health outcomes associated with cardiac rehabilitation, only one in four cardiac-rehabilitation-eligible Medicare beneficiaries participate.

## Who is a candidate for CR?

CR is recommended in all patients with acute coronary syndrome (ACS) within the last 12 months, coronary revascularization, chronic heart failure, symptomatic angina or peripheral artery disease, heart valve surgery, and cardiac transplantation (Class 1A recommendation for secondary prevention by the American Heart Association (AHA) and American College of Cardiology (ACC)). [\(Source\)](#)



Patients who have been diagnosed with the following CVDs may be good candidates for CR:

- Myocardial Infarction
- Coronary Artery Disease
- Heart Failure
- Peripheral Artery Disease
- Angina
- Cardiomyopathy
- Certain Congenital Heart Diseases
- Coronary Artery Bypass Surgery
- Angioplasty and Stents
- Heart or Lung Transplant
- Heart Valve Repair or Replacement
- Pulmonary Hypertension

Research has found that exercise-based CR has the potential to improve cardiovascular endurance, health status and quality of life for survivors of stroke.

Cardiac rehabilitation is supported by an Interdisciplinary Team of health care professionals, including cardiologists, nurses, nurse educators, nutrition specialists and physical and occupational therapists.

**ATS Physical Therapists and Occupational Therapists are integral members of the Interdisciplinary Team to support patients improve their overall cardiovascular health. [Contact us](#) to discuss how our team can support your patients stay on the road to recovery.**

## Leadership Recommendations

- Identify and discuss with the Interdisciplinary Team patients who could benefit from cardiac rehabilitation and meet specific inclusion/exclusion criteria.
- Encourage patients to participate in a CR program that is customized to their specific needs, including skilled Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy and strength training.
- Provide appropriate training to support skills and competencies to support the delivery of a comprehensive CR program.
- Facilitate long-term maintenance of lifestyle changes, monitoring risk factor changes and secondary prevention.

## Informative Articles and Resources

[Overview of the prevention of cardiovascular disease events in those with established disease \(secondary prevention\) or at very high risk](#)

[Exercise-Based Cardiac Rehabilitation in Patients with Coronary Heart Disease: A Practice Guideline – Netherlands Heart Journal](#)

[Patient Resources - Cardiac Rehabilitation – AACVPR](#)

[Cardiac Rehab Fact Sheet – AACVPR](#)

[Cardiac Rehabilitation and Implications During the COVID-19 Era](#)

[Heart to Heart: Occupational Therapy for Individuals Living With Heart Failure – AOTA](#)

## Services Spotlight: Cardiac Rehabilitation Services

Did you know that ATS provides cardiac rehab services to patients in all care settings, including skilled nursing, assisted/independent living, outpatient and home health? Working with an Interdisciplinary Team, we combine excellent therapeutic programming with state-of-the-art equipment for a perfect rehabilitative combination. [Contact us to learn more>](#)



## Reflections from the ATS Team

“ATS is an excellent rehabilitation employer that provides excellent support and opportunities for growth as a clinician. The professional growth of our therapists heightens with the continued exposure to specialized clinical training and development within our company.”

**Advanced Therapy Solutions exists to inspire, encourage, and motivate patients to excellence in therapy. Every patient is unique to us. Therefore, each one is treated with care, support, and dignity as they strive to achieve their daily therapy goals. We pride ourselves on treating others as they want to be treated, for this is our ultimate measure of the quality of care in every respect.**

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