

Living Well **WITH HEART DISEASE**

A guide for people with coronary artery disease



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How TO USE THIS GUIDE

Living Well with Heart Disease is written for adults with coronary artery disease. But your care partners, family and friends will find it helpful too.

Coronary artery disease can lead to:

- Chest pain (angina)
- Heart attack (myocardial infarction)
- Sudden stopping of the heart (cardiac arrest)

“When I first faced heart disease, I really felt like my body had betrayed me. It took me a long time to feel confident again. A guide like this will help people in the early days.”

~ Sandra

You may feel worried and afraid. These are normal feelings. You may also have questions, such as:

- Why did this happen to me?
- How will this change my life?
- What can I eat?
- Can I be physically active?
- What are these medications for?
- What about my future?
- Where can I go for more information or for help to get better?

This guide answers your questions and gives you tools to help your recovery. There is even space for you to write down your ideas and questions.

You can read *Living Well with Heart Disease* from cover to cover, or you can just look at the parts you need when you need them. Share the guide with family, friends and your healthcare team (the health professionals who are helping you). Knowing how you are doing will help them to support you.

Join our online survivor community for the latest research news, information, tips and strategies to help you manage your recovery. Visit heartandstroke.ca/connect to receive the Supporting Your Recovery e-newsletter.

Your Recovery

— GETTING YOU BACK TO HEALTH

Finding out you have coronary artery disease is a major life change. Your life with coronary artery disease may be quite different from the life you had before.

Your healthcare team is an important part of your recovery. Your team may include doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, pharmacists, dietitians, occupational therapists, social workers and counsellors. Listen to what they say, follow their advice, and make healthy lifestyle changes now.

Your care partners — the family and friends who support you most — also play important roles in your recovery.

Your recovery is everyone's goal, so reach out for help and support.

How can I help my recovery?

- 1. Learn.** You need to know the facts about coronary artery disease and recovery. Learn about your treatment options and the lifestyle changes you need to make.
- 2. Get involved.** You need to be involved in planning your care and setting goals. Ask questions and get answers.
- 3. Do your part.** Do what needs to be done to get better. You can't get better unless you make some lifestyle changes. That means eating a healthy diet and exercising regularly. Take your medication. This guide will provide support on this challenging journey.

ROLES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Each family is different. And every member has a role to play in the family. Coronary artery disease can change the family balance. Roles — both for the person with the condition and for other family members — may change. The same may be true with friendships. During recovery, you may need to work out a new role in your family and with your friends.

“What is important? It's your family, it's your health, those are the things that matter.”
~ Meldon

How can I help my loved ones help me? How can supporting each other help my recovery?

1. Talk positively, clearly and practically. Listen carefully. Always think about how the other person is feeling.
2. Support each other. Figure out what support you need and ask for it. Do you need help doing something? Is it emotional help you need? Do you need help learning how to do things differently?
3. Make sure you have different people to help you. Knowing you can ask them if you need to can be a big help.

A message **FOR CARE PARTNERS**

Juggling roles and providing daily support for your loved one can be tiring for even the most devoted person, no matter how happy you are to take on this role. To prevent burnout, it helps to eat well, stay active, get a good night's sleep and make time for enjoyable activities.

Care partners and family members should watch themselves and one another for signs of burnout. Reach out to family, friends, support groups or your healthcare team if you see these signs:

- Feeling unusually tense or edgy
- Being angry
- Feeling sad, tearful or dissatisfied with life in general
- Feeling very tired and saying things like, "It is too much"
- No longer seeing friends
- Getting sick more often and taking an unusually long time to recover (lowered immunity)
- Showing an increased need for drugs or using alcohol too much
- Feeling out of control, with no sense of how to regain that control
- Having trouble sleeping or having disturbing dreams
- Not eating well

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WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

Heart and Stroke Foundation online information can help you to manage and live healthy after heart disease. Visit heartandstroke.ca/heart