



Your heart surgery



A New Beginning

Cardiac Rehabilitation Service
Wythenshawe Hospital

Foreword

As a group of former heart patients, The Ticker Club has over 30 years of experience providing support for patients and their relatives in the outpatient department, on the cardiac wards and at patient information days at Wythenshawe Hospital. As part of this work, the Club has for some years now, been privileged to provide the funding that makes this cardiac rehabilitation booklet available to all the hospital's cardiac surgery patients.

In our direct personal contact with patients, their relatives and friends – from diagnosis at the beginning of the “patient journey”, through their hospital stay and beyond – it is the feedback we receive from all concerned that has established beyond doubt the high value placed on this booklet and its contents.

We have all found, here in this booklet, information and advice we could rely on to help us understand and benefit from the procedure we have undergone. At the same time it is clear this booklet has proved to be a valuable reference resource, not just for patients, but also for relatives, carers and supporters alike.

As patient support providers, we in The Ticker Club are pleased to help underpin the care and professionalism of all the Wythenshawe Hospital staff who will feature in your patient experience. We see this booklet as a key part of the support on offer. We hope you too, will find it helpful.

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**The
Ticker
Club**

Registered Charity No. 519754

The first edition (1992) and present edition of this booklet were created by the Cardiac Rehabilitation Clinical Lead Physiotherapist at Wythenshawe Hospital, with contributions from the Cardiac Rehabilitation and Heart Surgery Teams, together with colleagues from various wards and departments.

For further information about cardiac rehabilitation, please contact the Wythenshawe Hospital Cardiac Rehabilitation Service on 0161 291 2177 or email us at cardiac.rehab@mft.nhs.uk.

Section 1 Introduction

This cardiac rehabilitation information booklet was written to help ensure you receive detailed, consistent information from all the in-patient and out-patient staff looking after you. As it contains a large amount of information, we recommend that you read a small section at any one time.

Before your surgery, we would encourage you to refer to this booklet when asking the various members of staff any questions you may have, whilst you are in hospital and after going home. We suggest that any family or friends supporting you when you return home also read this information so that they know what to expect, too.

The aim of this booklet is to help you and your family to understand:

- Why you are having your operation, what it involves, what the risks and benefits are and what you may experience when you go into hospital;
- Details of your diagnosis and / or the procedure you have had
- How you will recover following your heart surgery;
- How you can plan for the future by making any necessary lifestyle changes and reduce further heart problems; and,
- How your recovery will be supported by you taking part in a cardiac rehabilitation programme.

What is cardiac rehabilitation?

Cardiac rehabilitation or cardiac rehab, as it is affectionately known, is a research based comprehensive programme delivered by a team of health professionals in a hospital, community or home-based setting. It has been shown to improve your health and wellbeing to help you live as full and active a life as possible. A specialist service, it is recognised by your surgeon and GP as a vital part of your treatment and recovery, to help you return to the best possible health following your operation.

The goals of cardiac rehab are to:

- Improve your awareness and understanding of the risk factors of cardiovascular disease;
- Provide you with information on coronary heart disease and its treatments;

- Develop an individual plan to help you to make positive long-term lifestyle changes; and
- Discuss physical activity and exercise to encourage you to exercise regularly and independently to improve your physical fitness.

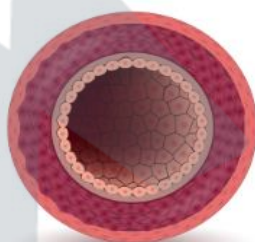
What is cardiovascular disease?

Cardiovascular disease (CVD) is the term for all types of diseases that affect the heart and/or blood vessels, including coronary heart disease. The exact cause of CVD is not clear. However there are many risk factors that can increase your chance of getting CVD. The more risk factors you have, the greater your chances of developing CVD (see Section 5 page 60 for detailed information).

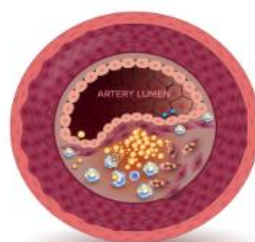
A healthy lifestyle can lower your risk of CVD. In patients already diagnosed with CVD, improving your lifestyle, minimising your risk factors, and staying healthy will reduce your chances of further cardiac events and maximise the benefits of surgery. This is called Secondary Prevention. Cardiac Rehabilitation tells patients how to minimise progressive heart disease.

What is coronary heart disease?

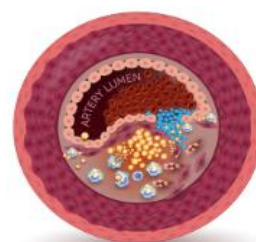
Coronary heart disease (CHD), or coronary artery disease as it is sometimes known, is a process that occurs over time. It is usually due to a gradual build-up of fat (cholesterol) within the walls of the coronary arteries, and can result in blockages that restrict blood flow to the heart. This can cause symptoms of angina (chest pain). A heart attack occurs when an area of the heart muscle has been completely starved of oxygen due to a blockage in a coronary artery, causing reversible or sometimes irreversible damage to the muscle fibres. With irreversible damage, the heart muscle fibres are replaced by scar tissue, leading to a reduction in heart function.



NORMAL ARTERY



**STABLE (FIBROUS)
PLAQUE FORMATION**

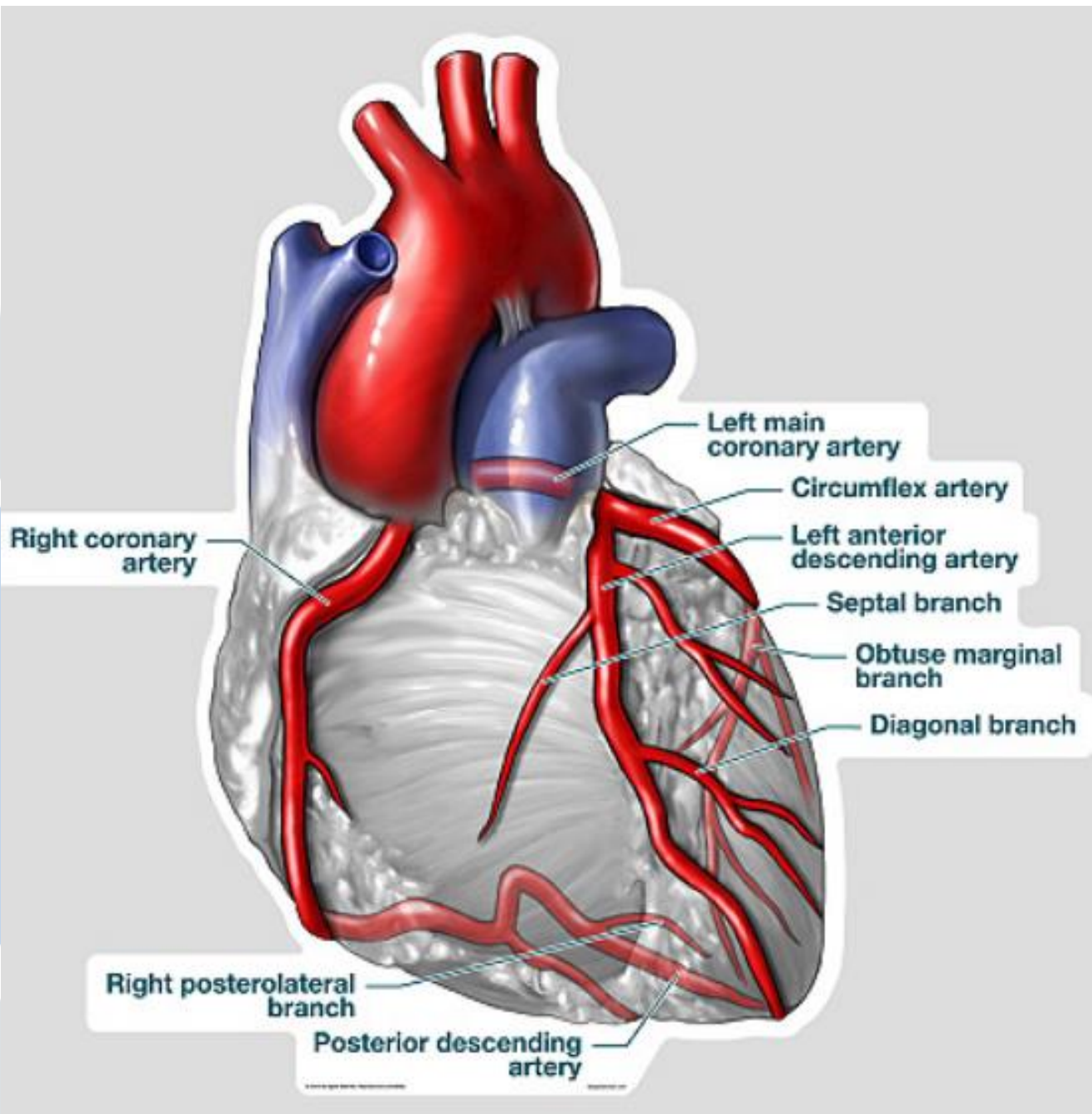


**UNSTABLE
PLAQUE FORMATION**

Where are the coronary arteries?

The heart is a muscular pump responsible for pumping blood, rich in oxygen, to all parts of the body. As with other muscles in the body it needs its own blood and oxygen supply. This comes from the two main coronary arteries (right and left), pictured below. The left artery divides into two arteries and together with the right coronary artery they form a network of blood vessels that run on the surface of the heart.

The Heart and Coronary Arteries



What is angina (chest pain)?

Angina is the most common symptom of coronary heart disease. It is a warning sign that the heart muscle is temporarily not receiving enough oxygenated blood due to narrowing of the coronary arteries. Angina can often be felt as discomfort or pain in the chest or in some cases discomfort in the arms, jaw, shoulders or upper back but everybody's experience of angina is different.

Stable angina occurs when the heart is working harder, for example, during unaccustomed levels of exercise or activity. It can also be felt if someone is under stress, excited or outside in hot, cold or windy weather. It can be well controlled with medication for example glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray.

Unstable angina is when symptoms come on with progressively less exercise or at rest and may also disturb sleep.

Guidance on what to do if you get angina (chest pain)

If you do get angina (chest pain) take the following steps:

Step 1. Stop what you are doing and sit down. Take 1 - 2 puffs of your glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray or GTN buccal tablets, between your inner lip and gum, if prescribed, and wait 5 minutes.

Step 2. If the pain persists after 5 minutes take a further 1 - 2 puffs.

Step 3. If there is no improvement after 10 minutes use your GTN spray for the third time and at the same time call for an ambulance by dialling 999. Do not take more than 3 doses of GTN spray.

Wait for help and remember:

1. Always wait for an ambulance or a doctor.
2. Do not get someone to drive you to hospital.
3. Do not drive yourself to hospital.
4. If possible, try to contact someone to be with you whilst waiting for an ambulance.