The Patient Following a Heart Attack

Thank you for choosing the Medical College of Georgia Hospital and Clinics for your health care needs. This information is to help answer some of your questions and to give you instructions to follow. If you have any other questions, please ask your doctor or nurse.

**Activity:**
- Periods of rest and a gradual increase in exercise are important to your recovery. Begin resuming activities slowly. Daily walking is encouraged. Call your doctor if any activity causes shortness of breath, extreme fatigue, lightheadedness or chest discomfort which does not go away shortly.
- Rest for 20 minutes twice daily.
- Avoid strenuous activities for at least 4-6 weeks. Check with your doctor about when you can resume hard physical activity.
- Avoid exercising outdoors during very hot and humid, or very cold weather.
- Sexual activity with your usual partner may be resumed 7-10 days after you go home. The energy used during sex is less than it takes to climb two flights of stairs. If you can climb two flights of stairs without chest discomfort, then you can assume it is okay to resume your usual pattern of sexual activity with your usual partner.
- Most people can and should return to work following a heart attack. Ask your doctor’s advise on when to resume your normal work schedule.

**Diet:**
Begin now to follow a low fat and low cholesterol diet for the rest of your life. You may have other dietary requirements that are specific to you, such as calorie restrictions if you are trying to lose weight, or adhering to a diabetic diet if you have diabetes. Follow the instructions that have been given to you during your hospitalization by your health care team.

**Medications:**
It is important to take your medications exactly as prescribed. Do not stop or change medications unless you talk to your doctor first. Some over the counter (nonprescription) medications, even common medicines such as cold medicines and pain relievers, may interact with the medications you are currently taking. Always check with your doctor before taking any nonprescription drugs.
**Risk Factor Modification:**
Begin now to make lifestyle changes to reduce your risk of having a second heart attack. You have identified your risk factors for heart disease. These may include smoking, high blood cholesterol, high blood pressure, lack of exercise, being overweight, and diabetes. Follow the guidelines given to you during your hospitalization for modifying these risks. Be realistic when setting goals. Don’t expect to change everything all at one time. Small gains can make a difference in making your life healthier.

**What To Do If You Have Chest Pain (Angina)**
- Stop activity and rest. Sit or lie down.
- Place one nitroglycerin tablet under the tongue. If the pain is not gone after 5 minutes, repeat with a second tablet. If the pain is not gone after 5 additional minutes, repeat with a third tablet.
- If pain is not gone after 15 minutes and 3 nitroglycerin tablets, call 911, or, if an Emergency Medical System is not available, ask someone to drive you to the nearest emergency room.

**Warning Signals for Action:**
Your body has certain warning signals that need urgent attention. If you notice any of the following warning signals, call your doctor immediately:
- Chest pain that is getting worse, lasts longer than usual, or happens when resting
- Swelling of hands, feet, ankles, or abdomen
- Unexplained weight gain of 3 to 5 pounds in a week
- Shortness of breath, particularly at rest
- Fast or irregular heartbeat
- Dizziness or fainting
- Feelings of extreme weakness or feeling extremely tired, especially with activity

**Follow-up Care:**
It is important to have medical follow up to be sure that your heart is still working well. You have been given an appointment with Dr. ________________ at (site)______________ on ____/____/____ at ____ o’clock.

If at any time you need to speak with your heart doctor at MCG, call (706) 721-2426. Ask to speak to your doctor or the cardiology doctor on call.