

Angioplasty Pack – Discharge Information

When you go home after an angioplasty there is some important information you should know. The aim of this information pack is to provide you with what you need to know along with some booklets and information sheets on healthy lifestyle.

Please take some time to read this information and if you have any questions contact the cardiac rehabilitation team who will be able to answer any queries you may have.

Care of your leg/wrist

The angioplasty will have been performed from either your groin or your wrist. You may be able to feel a pea sized lump at the site and it may feel bruised and sore. You should contact your GP or ward 6 if:

- the size of this lump gets bigger (bigger than a ten pence piece)
- the area becomes painful, hot or swollen

Ward 6 can be contacted directly on 0121 424 0206 and you can speak to one of the nursing staff for advice. Alternatively, if you were in Ward 9, they can be contacted directly on 0121 424 0209.

You should avoid having a bath or shower for 24 hours after the angioplasty has been performed but you can wash around the area with warm water.

You should avoid lifting, pushing or pulling anything heavy for a week after discharge (longer if you have had a heart attack).

Exercise

After a couple of days, or if the procedure was conducted via the top of your leg; when this feels comfortable, you should start performing some regular walking. Daily walking is a simple and safe way to return to normal activity, and should be regarded as part of your treatment and rehabilitation.

By undertaking a walking programme, you should not only speed up your recovery, but you will ensure you've achieved a suitable level of fitness to be able to take part in the cardiac rehab classes which will increase your fitness levels even further. This will not only improve your quality of life and make you feel better but reduce the risk of you having any further cardiac issues in the future.

Before going walking please:-

- Wear clothing that's suitable for the weather (dress up warmly in cold weather and wear a scarf over your mouth and nose to warm the air as you breathe in).
- Walk in the daylight and try to avoid walking very early in the morning or late in the evening even if it's still light outside.

Information for Patients

- Wear a watch so you're always aware how long you've been walking for.
- Do some warm up exercises before going out in cold weather; for example, have a stroll around the house for a few minutes.
- Make sure you have your GTN spray with you (and your fast acting bronchodilator if you have asthma).

Do not attempt to walk:-

- **If you have chest pain**
- If you are feeling unwell
- When you are tired
- When the weather is freezing cold, very windy, or if it's very warm outside
- Within one hour of eating a meal
- Within one hour of taking a hot bath or shower

Guidelines for a Daily Walking Programme

- Start with a short walk – about 5 minutes on your first day at a slow/moderate pace on flat ground and see how you feel. If it makes you feel tired during or after, stick to 5 minutes a day until you feel you are ready to go further.
- If you feel quite comfortable during the walk and not excessively tired afterwards, the next time increase your walking time by 5 minutes and see how you feel
- If everything still feels OK, and you are happy, you can start to increase the time of your walk by 5 minutes every day. You can use this method to build up to walking for a minimum of 30 minutes a day, if you feel able.
- Once you have built up to at least 30 minutes per day and you start to feel fitter, try to increase your walking pace slightly or try walking on some gentle inclines. By increasing the pace you should be able to cover the same distance in a shorter time. You can keep on increasing your pace as your fitness and confidence increases, however you should never increase your pace to the point that you're unable to walk and talk at the same time.
- Once you have started increasing your pace, you should always start your walk at a gentler pace for 5-10 minutes to warm-up and finish the same way for a cool down.

After you've finished your walk please:-

- Make sure you're recovered before you sit down. You can do this by slowing down to a very gentle stroll during the last section of your walk and/or lightly tap your feet from side to side for a few minutes when you've got back to your house.
- Have a proper rest even if you feel reasonably fresh afterwards.
- It may help to fill in a walking diary to keep a record of your walking progress

You should stop walking if you experience the following symptoms:-

- Angina
- Excessive breathlessness
- Excessive sweating
- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Nausea or vomiting
- Tiredness lasting more than 12 hours after exercise
- Palpitations (skipped heartbeats)
- Pain, swelling or stiffness in joints/muscles

Information for Patients

If you do experience any of these symptoms, wait for a few days and try walking again for a shorter distance and proceed more gradually. If symptoms persist, you should talk to your doctor.

Returning to Work

Depending on the nature of your job most people can return to work after 1 week. If your job involves a lot of heavy manual work you may be advised to leave it a little longer, you can discuss this further with your GP.

If you have a PCV (passenger carrying vehicle) or HGV (heavy goods vehicle) licence you will need to inform the DVLA and they will organise for you to have a routine exercise tolerance test at the hospital. This will be requested by them 6 weeks after the angioplasty and you will be sent an appointment in the post. You will have to have this and the results before the DVLA will allow you to drive these vehicles again.

Driving

You are **not licensed to drive for 1 week** after the angioplasty is performed. You do not need to inform the DVLA if you have had an uncomplicated procedure. But you **must** inform your car insurance company. The cardiac rehabilitation team can provide you a list of heart friendly insurance companies should you have any problems.

DVLA website <https://www.gov.uk/cardiac-problems-driving>

Holidays

The advice on when to fly can vary dependant on medical condition and between different airlines, it is best to discuss your plans with your cardiac rehab nurse, cardiology consultant and the airline. You **must always** make sure you have adequate health insurance for your holiday and make ensure your heart condition and any other pre-existing health conditions are covered on your policy. You can get a list of heart friendly insurance companies from the cardiac rehabilitation team or from the British Heart Foundation website: www.bhf.org.uk

Medication

You will need to get a repeat prescription of medication you have been prescribed on discharge. This can sometimes take a couple of days so make sure you allow enough time. If you feel you are experiencing any side effects from your medication then always see your GP and never stop taking tablets without seeking their advice first.

Glyceryl Trinitrate (GTN) Spray

Unless a medical reason has been identified you will be issued with a GTN spray on discharge. We do not give this because we expect you to have symptoms of angina, rather in the event of you having any similar symptoms to that which you experienced prior to admission.

About the spray

The GTN spray is used to **relieve** and **prevent** an attack of angina. It can be used prior to any activities that you associate symptoms of angina with, for example, climbing stairs, intercourse, walking up a steep hill etc.

Angina symptoms are individual and can vary from chest tightness / heaviness, chest pain / discomfort.

Other symptoms can include tingling in the throat/arms/fingers, numbness down one or both arms and breathlessness. It is advisable to discuss your symptoms with your nurse or doctor.

Information for Patients

The spray works very rapidly as it is absorbed under the tongue. Carry it with you at all times, keep it out of sunlight and store it in a cool place.

Always check the expiry date and ensure you have enough of the spray before going on holiday. You can buy GTN spray over the counter at the chemist.

The main side effects are headaches, flushing and/or redness of the skin and dizziness. These tend to be short lived - they should disappear after a few minutes. However, if any of these effects prove to be troublesome, and you are unable to carry out your normal activities, contact your doctor.

There can be other side-effects; these are described in the information leaflet that comes with the spray. If you want to discuss these please speak to your doctor.

Sometimes when the spray is not tolerated your doctor may suggest GTN tablets. Do try to persevere with the spray, as it is very important to relieve any symptoms of angina.

What to do when you have angina symptoms

- First sit down and stop what you are doing!
- Hold the GTN spray upright and do not shake it
- Take one dose i.e. spray once or twice (whichever you can tolerate) under the tongue and **Keep your mouth closed (very important)**
- Wait five minutes, still resting. If you still have the symptoms after this time, **take a second dose** i.e. one or two sprays.
- Wait five minutes, still resting. If the symptoms are still present after this time, **dial 999 for an ambulance**
- **Do not wait for more than 15 minutes for the symptoms to go away without seeking medical attention**

If you have taken the medication every **five minutes** as advised the pain and symptoms should be relieved. You should keep to this advice and avoid long periods between each dose of the spray. Ensure the pain and/or symptoms have gone before you resume your normal activities.

Do not drive while experiencing angina symptoms

Tell your GP if you experience any of the following:

- Pain or angina symptoms while you are resting
- Increased use of the spray
- Symptoms returning easily after being relieved with the spray

If you feel your condition is getting worse at any time please call for an ambulance

Anticoagulants / Antiplatelet drugs

As part of your treatment you received a combination of various blood thinning medications:

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It is unlikely that you will develop any side effects, however if you experience any of the following symptoms you should call the staff on ward 6 for advice on 0121 424 3566 or 424 2206:

- Unexplained bruising
- Unexplained bleeding
- Passing blood in urine or when opening bowels

If you hit your head or experience a head injury it is a possibility that you could bleed inside your head. You should be taken to the nearest A&E department to be examined as soon as possible. If you experience the following symptoms or your relative observes them, you should go the A&E straight away:

unconsciousness, or lack of full consciousness (for example, problems keeping eyes open)
any confusion (not knowing where you are, getting things muddled up)
any drowsiness (feeling sleepy) that goes on for longer than 1 hour when you would normally be wide awake
difficulty waking up
any problems understanding or speaking
any loss of balance or problems walking
any weakness in one or more arms or legs
any problems with your eyesight
very painful headache that won't go away
any vomiting – getting sick
any fits (collapsing or passing out suddenly)
clear fluid coming out of your ear or nose
new bleeding from one or both ears

Foods for a Healthy Heart

Everyone should aim for a well balanced diet, which will help to protect your heart.

This includes:

1. Plenty of fruit and vegetables
2. Plenty of starchy foods e.g. bread, rice, potatoes, pasta. Choose wholegrain varieties wherever possible. Oats have also been shown be beneficial for your heart.
3. Some milk and dairy products
4. Some meat, fish, eggs, beans and other non-dairy sources of protein
5. Only a small amount of foods and drinks high in fats and/or sugar

Eat more fruit and vegetables to protect your heart:

Fruit and vegetables are a good source of vitamins, minerals and fibre. 5 portions a day are recommended.

What is a portion?

- One apple, orange, pear, banana
- Two small fruits (plums, tangerines)
- Small handful of dried fruit
- Cupped handful of grapes, berries
- A medium bowl of salad
- 2–3 tablespoons of cooked vegetables
- 1 glass of unsweetened fruit juice (150 ml)

How to eat more?

- Have fruit, dried fruit or juice with breakfast
- Add extra vegetables to stews, curries and casseroles
- Choose fruit as a snack
- Add a salad to sandwiches or side salad with main meals

Remember to have a variety of different fruits and vegetables. Choose from fresh, tinned or frozen.

Which fats are good for your heart?

If you are overweight, cutting down on all fats can help you to lose weight. Reducing animal fats and using unsaturated fats can help reduce cholesterol levels.

Eat less:

- **Saturated fats (animal sources)**

Butter, ghee, lard, full fat milk, cheese, cream, meat, poultry and processed foods (cakes, biscuits, chocolates, crisps, puddings, pies).

Replace with:

- **Unsaturated fats (plant sources)**

Choose vegetable or olive oil and use low-fat spread or olive oil margarine. **Use sparingly!**

How to reduce your saturated fats:

- Choose low-fat alternatives of milk (skimmed or semi-skimmed), cheese and yoghurt.
- Try to limit processed foods that are high in fat.
- Choose healthier cooking methods such as grilling, steaming and poaching.
- Take the skin or fat off poultry and meat.
- If you eat meat, aim for 3–4 oz (75–100 g) of meat or poultry per meal.

Fish is a good source of healthy fats – try to choose fish and chicken more often than red meat. It is recommended that the general population aims for 1 portion of oily fish (e.g. salmon, mackerel, fresh tuna) and 1 portion of white fish (e.g. cod, haddock) per week.

Salt

Eating too much salt increases the risk of high blood pressure. Try to use alternative flavourings e.g. herbs and spices where possible

Information for Patients

Alcohol

Consumption should be kept within safe limits – no more 14 units/week for men and women. A unit is 1/2 pint of beer, lager or cider, 1 single pub measure of spirits e.g. whisky, gin or vodka, 1 small glass of wine.

A Balanced diet and healthy lifestyle!

You doctor or dietitian can provide you with more detailed advice on changes to your diet, weight and lifestyle that are good for your heart. Don't forget that keeping to a healthy weight and increasing physical activity also helps to keep your heart healthy.

Contact us:

If you would like more information about your condition, please contact:

The Dietetics Dept
Birmingham Heartlands Hospital
Bordesley Green East
Birmingham
B9 5SS
Telephone Number 0121 424 2673 - 8am – 4pm

British Heart Foundation

Telephone: 08450 70 80 70 or visit them on the internet <http://www.bhf.org.uk>

Cardiac Rehabilitation Programme

After you have had your angioplasty it is recommended that you attend a cardiac rehabilitation programme which is aimed at helping to improve confidence and physical activity as part of your recovery. Your rehabilitation nurse will assess your suitability for such a programme and discuss the options with you. There are three components to the programme which are:

1. Education – a range of subjects are covered including healthy eating, medication, angina, blood pressure, exercise.
2. Exercise
3. Relaxation

If you would like any further details you can contact the cardiac rehabilitation team Monday to Friday on:

0121 424 2000 Bleep 2915 or direct 0121 424 3312 at Heartlands Hospital
0121 424 2000 Bleep 2993 or direct 0121 424 4286 at Solihull Hospital
0121 424 7465 at Good Hope Hospital

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk