Leading an active, healthy lifestyle is important for your overall health, especially if you recently experienced a heart attack or other cardiac event. When compared to their younger counterparts, older Americans are typically at a higher risk of complications from an adverse cardiac event, which can lead to prolonged hospital stays and progressive loss of quality of life.

Nearly 800,000 people in the U.S. have a heart attack every year. Cardiac rehabilitation not only can help a person recover from a heart condition but also prevent another cardiac issue in the future, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

If you recently experienced a heart attack or heart failure, or had open-heart surgery or a stent implant, your doctor may recommend a cardiac rehabilitation program to guide your return to better health. Cardiac rehabilitation is a carefully structured and monitored outpatient program combining exercise and education to increase activity and improve health and well-being in a safe environment.

Accredited by the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation, the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital offers four program components: medical evaluation, physical activity, lifestyle education and psycho-social support. The goals of the cardiac rehabilitation program are to help you regain strength, prevent your condition from worsening and reduce your risk of future heart problems.

**Medical Evaluation**
A thorough medical evaluation helps your cardiac rehab team assess your physical abilities, medical limitations and other conditions.

“You will complete a six-minute walk test, which allows the cardiac rehab team to evaluate your vital signs, including blood pressure, heart rate, blood oxygen and overall health,” said Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital Medical Director Peter Correnti, DO. “Following the walk test, your team will tailor a cardiac rehabilitation program especially for you, ensuring it is safe and effective.”

**Psycho-Social Support**
Emotionally adjusting to a serious heart problem often takes time, and you may experience depression or anxiety, lose touch with your social support system or need to stop working for several weeks. Counseling, group support and stress management techniques provided by your cardiac rehab team will help you build healthy coping skills.

It is important to check and see if cardiac rehab is covered by your insurance. It is also important to keep your goals in mind. They may include increasing your endurance to improve your health or staying more active.

“Cardiac rehab helps you improve both your health and quality of life after an adverse heart event and helps reduce risk for future cardiovascular issues,” said Dr. Correnti.

The Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at Mercy Fitzgerald Hospital offers rehabilitation sessions every Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Typically, patients participate in the program for six to 12 weeks.

To make an appointment with one of our experienced cardiac rehab care team members, call 610-237-4580 or visit mercyhealth.org.