

SETTING Suburban General Practice

PATIENT You are 45 and recovering from a mild heart attack two weeks ago. You were discharged from hospital four days ago. You are unsure how much physical activity is appropriate and are seriously worried that the heart attack has left you dramatically weakened. You fear that any physical activity such as walking, gardening or swimming might bring on another heart attack. The doctors have told you that another episode may be more severe than the first.

- TASK**
- Explain your tiredness to the doctor and express your concern about your future.
 - Ask how much physical activity is advisable. Admit your fear that any physical activity may provoke a relapse.
 - Ask when you can return to work (you are an office worker sitting at a desk all day) and whether the condition will make you an invalid for the rest of your life.
 - What can you do to reduce the risk of further attacks?

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DOCTOR This 45-year-old patient is attending the practice after suffering a mild anterior acute myocardial infarct two weeks ago. Recovery was uncomplicated and the patient was discharged from hospital four days ago. He/she is now very concerned about the long-term process of recovery.

- TASK**
- Find out what is worrying the patient and be reassuring. Some fatigue is to be expected; it usually takes some weeks before full energy levels return.
 - Advise the patient of the importance of joining the cardiac rehabilitation program at a nearby hospital in order to increase exercise tolerance under supervision.
 - Explain the importance of exercise (e.g., to lower cholesterol, lose weight, strengthen heart etc.).
 - Reassure the patient that his/her concerns are appropriate. Moderate physical activity is all right two weeks after a mild event with a good recovery, with usually four to six weeks before attempting to return to work.
 - Provide recommendations for prevention of future attack (diet, relaxation, stress management).