What’s your next step?

The HeartSmart Program – helping you to reduce your risk of another heart problem
“It has been clinically proven following a cardiac event that cardiac rehabilitation is ESSENTIAL. (Circulation 2010; 121:63).

It returns people back to their normal lives with increased confidence and reduced cardiac representations.”

A/Prof Ron Dick, Chairman, Cardiac Sciences Clinical Institute, Epworth HealthCare

We have designed this booklet to help ensure the best possible standards of care and service are available for eligible heart patients.

We hope this booklet will help you, your family and carers understand what may now be expected from taking part in a cardiac rehabilitation program.

This booklet is not intended to replace the advice that your doctor or cardiac rehabilitation team give you, based on their assessment of your condition.
Congratulations!

The HeartSmart Program is a very important step in your recovery. When someone with a heart problem is left unsure, anxious, or depressed, they can have more hospital visits and more tests than someone who is informed.

As a cardiac nurse, I’m often asked, “Is there anything I can do to get my heart back into shape and lower my chance of another heart problem?” My answer is always the same; “Yes, there are many things you can do.” And then I give them this booklet.

The HeartSmart Program is a great place for you and your loved ones to learn the steps towards changing your life. All of us at HeartSmart are driven by one goal: To build healthier lives for people with heart problems. HeartSmart can help you work towards realistic and achievable personal goals that restore your health.

The need for HeartSmart is beyond questioning. It saves lives.

Nanci Thurston
HeartSmart Program Co-ordinator

“Despite my medical background, when I had a heart attack, I was quite unprepared for the physical and emotional after effects. I attended the HeartSmart Program and found it to be very informative and supportive. I particularly enjoyed the camaraderie with the other patients. I would urge anyone who has had a cardiac event to attend the program.”

Dr David Leong, General Practitioner HeartSmart graduate at age 60 - today age 63
“HeartSmart was the most important thing that helped me eliminate seven risk factors and dramatically cut my chances of having another heart attack. Thanks to HeartSmart, I am now healthier than I have been for 30 years. Get smart. Get HeartSmart.”

Michael Smith, former editor of The Age and author of Downsize Me, HeartSmart graduate at age 56 - today age 61

**What is Cardiac Rehabilitation?**
Cardiac rehabilitation (cardiac rehab) is a professionally supervised program of education and exercise for people with a heart problem. It helps them improve their lifestyle and heart health so they recover more quickly, stay healthy, and live longer.
The next step in your recovery

We see your recovery as having three steps. As you achieve the goals for each step, you gain confidence and a better understanding of how to effectively manage your heart’s health.

**Step 1 – Hospitalisation**

Starts when your heart problem puts you in hospital and ends when you return home. Step 1 prepares you for the day-to-day activities you will need to do once you are discharged.

**Step 2 – Cardiac rehabilitation**

Begins one to two weeks after being discharged from hospital. You go once a week for six weeks. Or if you’ve had a stent, you can choose to attend once a week for three weeks.

You join others who, like you, are learning to live with heart disease. Delivered by a multidisciplinary team, the program includes:

- A cardiac assessment.
- A closely supervised exercise program tailored to your needs.
- Education to help you understand your heart condition and how to manage your risk factors.

**Step 3 – Maintenance program**

Step 3 begins the day you put your HeartSmart plan into action and continues for the rest of your life. The aim is to help reduce your overall long-term risk factors for heart disease by following a healthier lifestyle.

**Family support**

Family members are also important to this process. Family participation and support play an incredibly important role in your recovery and continued good health. Your partner or spouse can exercise with you or simply provide encouragement and support.

Family members can encourage you to finish the HeartSmart Program, join you in a healthier diet, and remind you to take your medication. They can also monitor your mood and wellbeing. Involving your family can increase the likelihood of achieving your goals.

**Epworth HeartSmart strongly encourages you to bring a support person to all your sessions.**
“I thought after my surgery I would go home and that would be it! The HeartSmart program really helped by reassuring me that my blood pressure and heart rate were good, ensuring that I didn’t overdo the exercise, too much, too soon. But most importantly - it put me in the ‘right mental space’ to achieve a speedy recovery.”

Kaye Caulfield, HeartSmart graduate at age 59 - today age 64

**Why is Heartsmart needed?**

Research studies show that cardiac rehab participants can dramatically reduce the risk of having further heart problems.

Cardiac Rehab is associated with a 20% to 30% reduction in mortality in persons with coronary artery disease, particularly after a heart attack. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2009; 54(1): 25-33.
Q & A: HeartSmart basics

Do I need to attend?
The HeartSmart Program is for people of all ages who are either at risk or have experienced a:

- Heart attack
- Heart procedure
- Heart problem
- Heart surgery

What is HeartSmart?
HeartSmart is a cardiac rehab program founded in 1992. It is run by a team of dedicated health professionals devoted to helping people with a heart problem live longer. Your HeartSmart team consists of:

- Cardiac nurse
- Pharmacist
- Paramedic
- Volunteers
- Dietitian
- Physiotherapist
- Psychologist
- Most importantly you and your family

What does HeartSmart do?
HeartSmart informs and educates people with a heart problem by giving them practical advice and instruction on how to manage their risk factors, medications, diet and exercise. Our aim is that you:

- Live longer
- Reduce your risk of further heart problems
- Return earlier to work
- Develop your well being
- Move on and enjoy your life.

What’s the cost?
Most private health funds and Veterans’ Affairs cover the cost of the HeartSmart Program.

How do I get started?
Phone HeartSmart on (03) 9426 6625, or email heartsmart@epworth.org.au.
“After my heart attack, I suddenly felt very fragile and feared a repeat attack. How did I come to this situation? What was going to happen to me? I needed to know. I suffered not only a damaged heart – but a damaged spirit as well. Attending HeartSmart was like being led through the fog by someone who knew the way. The caring and friendly staff there mended my spirit and put me on the road to living a full life again.”

Tanya, HeartSmart graduate at age 42 - today age 45

Thousands of people with a heart problem have benefited from HeartSmart.

YOU CAN BE ONE OF THEM TOO.
Attending a cardiac rehabilitation program after cardiac surgery plays a pivotal role in improving a patient’s recovery from heart surgery. There is the opportunity to attend in a group session, with the patient’s spouse or partner, to ensure that further preventative measures aimed at heart disease and coronary artery disease in particular, can be learnt and adhered to. There are often numerous small and large problems confronting patients during recovery, after they have been discharged from hospital. There is the opportunity to discuss these with professionally trained people, as well as hear how other people are progressing after their surgery. I often find that post-operative patients look forward to their “weekly sessions”, which improve their recovery from this traumatic event in their lives.

Mr Peter Skillington, Cardiothoracic Surgeon  
Deputy Chairman, Cardiac Sciences Clinical Institute, Epworth HealthCare

Having cardiac surgery is a major undertaking. Many people focus on the surgery and the immediate hospital period, forgetting that it is only the first step in a long journey. Often it is the later phases of the recovery that are the most challenging. This is where HeartSmart is invaluable. Developing a healthy lifestyle and making long term changes to reduce risk factors is a critical part of the treatment of heart conditions. The education and encouragement from the staff are extremely helpful. Connecting with others in the same boat and sharing this experience is always helpful and rewarding. This helps people recover their confidence and provides support through some of the difficult and frustrating times. I strongly recommend this important program to anyone recovering from a heart condition.

Mr Aubrey Almeida, Cardiothoracic Surgeon  
Deputy Chairman, Cardiac Sciences Clinical Institute, Epworth HealthCare
HeartSmart – Your next step

Managing a heart problem is challenging. Your journey to being well may be filled with many questions and concerns along the way. You need not travel that road alone. Help is available.

Epworth can assist you, your family and friends through this time of change and adjustment. Our HeartSmart Program can help provide a positive experience.

HeartSmart is a safe and meaningful way for you to:

- Feel better faster
- Lower your risk of another cardiac event
- Live longer and live well.

To register, phone (03) 9426 6625 today. Mon – Fri 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Or email heartsmart@epworth.org.au.