

Cardiac Rehabilitation Referral Resources

How to use this document

Cardiac rehabilitation (cardiac rehab, CR) is an evidence-based therapy that reduces mortality, morbidity, and hospital readmissions in patients with ischemic heart disease. However, CR is widely underused: 25% of US hospitals refer less than 20% of eligible patients.

This document is intended to assist in your conversations with eligible patients to educate and refer them to cardiac rehabilitation programs.

What patients are eligible for cardiac rehab?

Cardiac-related conditions or events	Cardiac procedures
Heart attack in the past 12 months	Coronary angioplasty or stent
Stable chronic heart failure	Bypass surgery
Current stable angina	Heart valve replacement or repair
	Heart or heart-lung transplant

Cardiac rehabilitation key benefits

1. **Improved Heart Function:** The structured exercises and activities will help strengthen your heart muscle, improving its ability to pump blood efficiently.
2. **Reduced Risk of Future Heart Problems:** By learning about heart-healthy habits, such as proper nutrition and stress management, you can lower your risk of future heart issues.
3. **Increased Energy and Stamina:** As your heart becomes stronger and more efficient, you'll notice improved stamina and reduced fatigue in daily activities.
4. **Better Quality of Life:** Cardiac rehab can help you regain confidence in your physical abilities and reduce anxiety about your heart condition.
5. **Personalized Support:** You'll receive personalized guidance from health care professionals, including nurses, exercise specialists, and dietitians, who will monitor your progress and provide support throughout the program.
6. **Long-Term Health Benefits:** Studies show that participating in cardiac rehab can significantly reduce the likelihood of future heart problems and improve long-term outcomes.

Referring patients to cardiac rehabilitation:

Establish Cardiac Rehabilitation Referral Process:

- Identify or establish a standardized cardiac rehabilitation referral process for your organization
 - Standardize and automate internal and external referral processes to increase patient participation by enrolling them in outpatient cardiac rehabilitation programs before hospital discharge Refer to the American College of Cardiology [Toolkit](#).
 - Integrate electronic health record (HER) “opt-out” order sets, and discharge checklists (AACVPR).

- For more information refer to the American Association for Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation [Resources for Professionals](#)
- Provider Best Practices
 - Minimize the window of time between the hospital discharge, cardiac rehabilitation referral, and the patient's first cardiac rehab appointment time. The optimal time goal is <21 days, with the best practice goal of 14-17 days.
 - Follow up with patients who do not enroll or attend their first cardiac rehabilitation appointment.

Who can refer patients to cardiac rehab (Refer or develop organizational policies)

Beginning January 1, 2024, the required direct supervision of pulmonary rehabilitation services, as specified at 42 CFR 410.47, and cardiac rehabilitation and intensive cardiac rehabilitation services, as specified at 42 CFR 410.49, may be furnished by:

- a doctor of medicine.
- a doctor of osteopathy.
- a physician assistant,
- a nurse practitioner.*

**State Specific – be sure to check your state’s NP & PA scope of practice per the Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services MMI3513 - Pulmonary Rehabilitation, Cardiac Rehabilitation, & Intensive Cardiac Rehabilitation Expansion of Supervising Practitioners (cms.gov).*

Conversation starters for your patient who is eligible for cardiac rehab

It is important to educate patients on the benefits of CR, manage their expectations and help them find an available program.

Conversation starters to assist with the referral process

- “Based on your recent cardiac event/treatment, I believe you would benefit from cardiac rehabilitation. This program will help you regain strength, manage your condition and improve your overall heart health. I’ll arrange a referral for you to start the program as soon as possible.”
- “Cardiac rehab is a structured program designed to help you recover after a heart attack, heart surgery, or other heart-related conditions. It involves supervised exercise, education on heart-healthy living, and support to improve your overall cardiovascular health.

If a patient is hesitant about cardiac rehab

- “Thank you for sharing your concerns about cardiac rehabilitation. I understand it can feel overwhelming. However, I want to assure you that cardiac rehab is designed to support your recovery and improve your heart health. Many patients find it beneficial in regaining strength and confidence after a heart-related event. Let’s discuss how we can address your concerns together.”

Source: [117_UHN CR referral script for MDs and APPs.pdf \(aacvpr.org\)](#)





How do you bill for cardiac rehabilitation?

For more information on [billing and coding for cardiac rehabilitation](#) visit CMS.gov.

If you have questions regarding the billing and coding link, please get in touch with the Medicare Administrative Contractor listed in the Contractor Information section of the above article.