

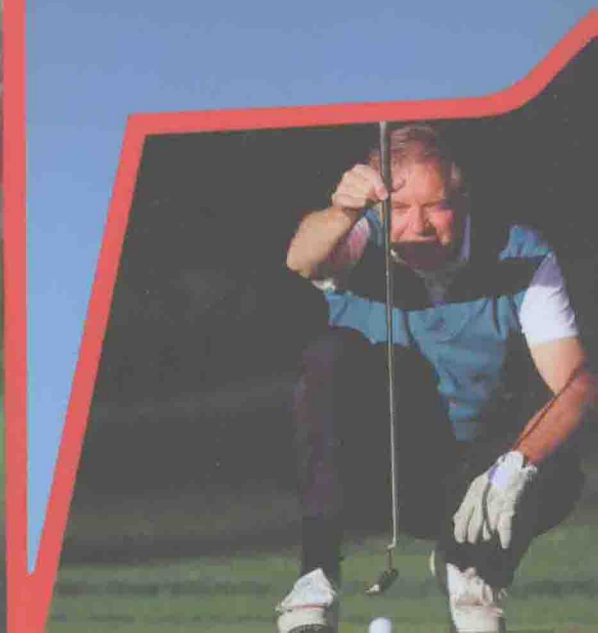
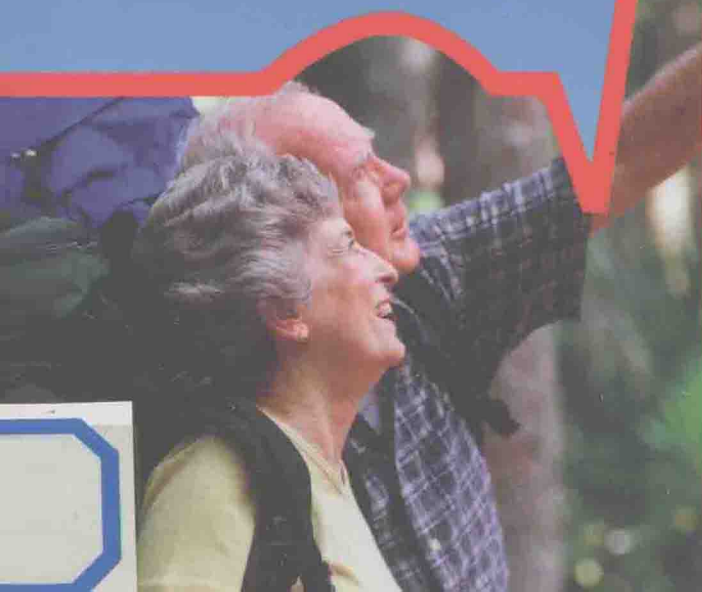
The Healthy Heart Book

Proven and practical
information for:

- Exercise and
active living
- Diet
- Stress management
- and more

Morag Thow
Keri Graham
Choi Lee

Foreword by the
British Association for
Cardiovascular Prevention
and Rehabilitation

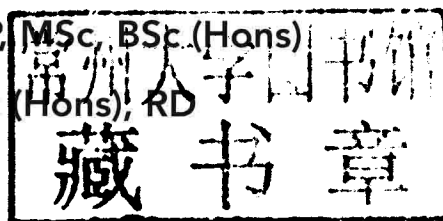


The Healthy Heart Book

Morag Thow, PhD, BSc, Dip PE, MCSP, MBE

Keri Graham, MCSP, MSc, BSc (Hons)

Choi Lee, BSc (Hons), RD



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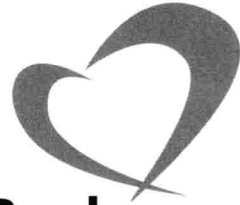
United States: Human Kinetics
P.O. Box 5076
Champaign, IL 61825-5076
800-747-4457
e-mail: humank@hkusa.com

Canada: Human Kinetics
475 Devonshire Road Unit 100
Windsor, ON N8Y 2L5
800-465-7301 (in Canada only)
e-mail: info@hkcanada.com

Europe: Human Kinetics
107 Bradford Road
Stanningley
Leeds LS28 6AT, United Kingdom
+44 (0) 113 255 5665
e-mail: hk@hkeurope.com

Australia: Human Kinetics
57A Price Avenue
Lower Mitcham, South Australia 5062
08 8372 0999
e-mail: info@hkaustralia.com

New Zealand: Human Kinetics
P.O. Box 80
Torrens Park, South Australia 5062
0800 222 062
e-mail: info@hknewzealand.com



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Morag Thow, PhD, BSc, Dip PE, MCSP, MBE

Keri Graham, MCSP, MSc, BSc (Hons)

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Foreword



Promoting excellence in cardiovascular disease prevention and rehabilitation

So often, health and rehabilitation programmes provide people with heart disease with numerous leaflets and handouts that easily get misplaced and appear to have a short-life. Having a single, long lasting “proper” book that includes most of the written heart information resources under one cover literally gives it a long shelf-life, which can then be referred to as and when needed.

You may be someone who has experienced a heart problem, or you might have a family member or friend with heart disease. There are few books available for people like you that help you learn how to best cope with these conditions. Yet the number of books written for medical and health care professionals on heart health and rehabilitation is almost uncountable. The words and guidance in these many professional books are only of use if they can be transformed into helping you to understand and make changes for better health. Having a “how to” book for people like you, which reflects the work of heart health and rehabilitation practitioners, seems only logical.

The British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation (BACPR) is pleased to see that such a book, *The Healthy Heart Book*, is now available for people with heart disease and their families. This book reflects the core components set out by the BACPR for an effective heart health and rehabilitation programme. Literally, “at the heart” of these core components is helping people better understand your needs and make changes towards a healthier life. This means understanding and better managing lifestyle (activity, diet, smoking), mental and emotional well-being, medications, and so becoming your own health manager.

Success in anything, including being healthier and happier, is always best achieved when you have been able to take control and do it for yourself. This book can help you take the important guidance from the heart health team and transform it into your own heart health programme.

Preface

The Healthy Heart Book explains why and how to protect your heart with a healthy lifestyle. It also helps you to make sense of how and what you are feeling after a heart event such as heart attack, angina, stent insertion or heart surgery. After a heart event you may feel physically and emotionally overwhelmed; it can be frightening for you and those close to you. However, you are not alone. Each year, thousands of people are sharing the same experience. It is reassuring to know that, with the help of a healthy lifestyle, a large proportion of these people move on to live normal, healthy lives. In 2010 the British Heart Foundation (BHF) reported that over 56 thousand patients took part in health related cardiac rehabilitation in England, Northern Ireland and Wales. They reported the following year that there had been major improvements in survival rates following a heart event. If patients stick with a *healthy heart* lifestyle, they significantly increase their chance of longer, healthy lives. Many people take their health for granted, so when a heart event occurs it knocks their confidence. They think, *What? It can't be me!* This type of experience can change the way you think about your body. This book helps you understand that your thoughts and feelings are natural, teaches you to recognise when you need a bit more support, and ultimately gives you the tools to get control of your life.

In the pages of this book you will discover the following:

- What coronary heart disease is and how it is treated
- How you feel emotionally and physically after a heart event
- How a 'heart MOT' can help you assess your risk of coronary heart disease
- How to be active and exercise
- How to eat well for optimal heart health
- How to cope with stress and learn to relax
- How to access a wide range of sources of support
- How to continue to manage your healthy lifestyle in the long term

Each chapter provides examples of real-life experiences and easy, practical tips to help you on your way to a happy, healthy and confident future. Whether you or someone close to you has had heart ill-health or would like to find out more about a healthy lifestyle, this book is for you.

Introduction

You may already know of many things that you can do for your heart health. However, as is true for most people, what you *know* and what you *do* may not necessarily be connected. This book can help you make that connection.

If you have had a heart event, such as heart attack, angina, stent insertion or heart surgery, your physician has probably recommended that you begin a healthy heart programme, often referred to as cardiac rehabilitation. Ideally this programme includes doctors, nurses, physiotherapy and exercise specialists, dietitians and psychologists. This team helps you do the following:

- Understand your heart condition and how to best maintain the benefits of the medical treatments and therapies you have received
- Become more physically active in a safe, confident and enjoyable way
- Eat an enjoyable, healthy and balanced diet
- Stop smoking
- Manage feelings of stress, anxiety and depression related to your health and everyday life
- Understand the importance of your medication
- Continue to manage your healthy lifestyle in the long term

After a heart event, a big part of your recovery comes from you. However, you also benefit from the support of the medical profession and those closest to you. A healthy heart programme helps you gain confidence, motivation, fitness, knowledge and understanding. It is a valuable source of supervised exercise and education from supportive specialist professionals who help you take control of your life.

This book is a supplement to the support you receive from your local cardiac rehabilitation professionals. It helps you to understand what coronary heart disease is, the common feelings (emotional and physical) that people have after a diagnosis of heart disease, and what you can do to help yourself. It combines information about the most recent scientific evidence, expert opinion about heart health and, most important, the patient's and his or her loved ones' experiences. It is honest, useful and full of real-life stories.

When I was in hospital after having my heart attack I felt foolish and scared. I also thought, *Why me?* My head was a mess.

Danny, age 58

This book introduces all of the lifestyle changes you should consider making, if you haven't already, after a heart event. These changes include stopping smoking, living an active lifestyle and taking regular exercise, eating a healthy diet, keeping to a healthy weight and shape, making sensible choices about alcohol, and using effective coping strategies for negative feelings, stress, worry, anger and tension. The book offers practical ideas on how to protect your heart and how you and your loved ones can achieve improved heart health, improved general well-being, and a happy and confident future. For many people, having a heart event can literally change their lives. It encourages people to look at their lives and decide what is important and it motivates them to make positive changes in lifestyle. It can be a chance to have a more positive and fulfilling future.

My stent and the fright I had was the best thing that happened to me. I am now much fitter and I spend much more fun time with my grandchildren.

Hilda, age 62

This book reveals the honest journey of real-life cardiac patients. It gives you and your loved ones practical ways to take control and live a healthier life. It supports you during all the stages of your recovery. You can use it in your own time whenever you need to build and reinforce your healthy future.

For information that is beyond the scope of the book, we direct you to websites and other sources of support and information. References are carefully selected to help lead you to legitimate sources and dispel any common myths about heart health.

A Comprehensive Approach to Recovery

The British Association for Cardiovascular Prevention and Rehabilitation (BACPR) provides, develops and improves core standards to ensure the safe and effective delivery of cardiovascular prevention and rehabilitation practices and programmes throughout the UK. The following diagram demonstrates that the BACPR places equal emphasis on the delivery of care in the following areas: lifestyle risk factor management, psychosocial health, medical risk factor management and cardioprotective therapies.

This book covers all the core components necessary for a healthy heart and lifestyle. The BACPR diagram (figure 1) also indicates that health behaviour change and education are important to all the other components necessary for a healthy heart.

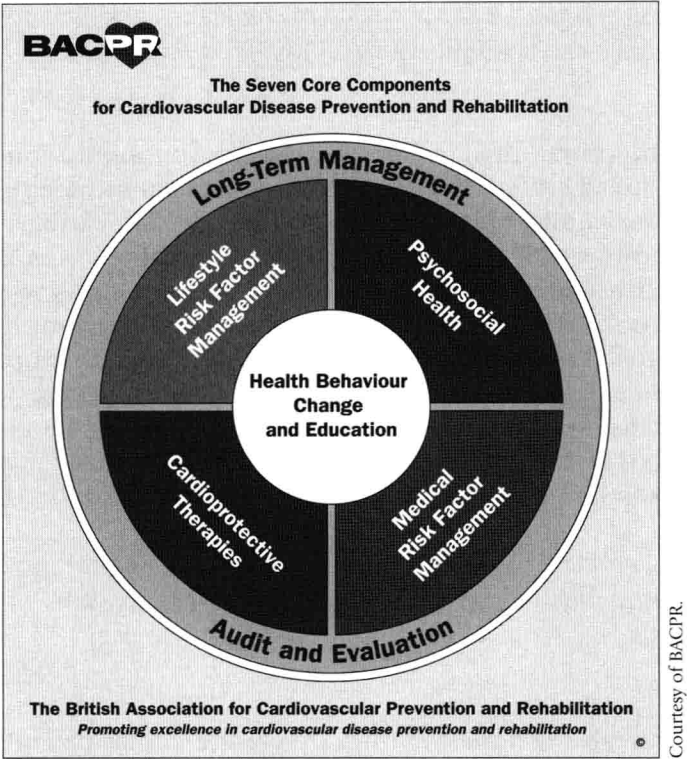


Figure 1 BACPR principles for a healthy heart and lifestyle.

Health behaviour change means how you go about changing unhealthy ways and habits. Each person is different, so when you decide to make changes in your own unique lifestyle, you need to understand why and how to make them for yourself. This book provides you with the education you need in order to make beneficial and life-long lifestyle decisions.

If you would like to know more information about the BACPR, see www.bacpr.com.

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Coronary Heart Disease and How It Is Treated

Before we talk about your recovery from a heart event, let's have a quick look at a few questions you may be asking:

- What is coronary heart disease (CHD)?
- How does CHD affect the heart?
- How can CHD be treated?

This chapter answers these questions so that you can better understand what CHD is and how it is treated. It explains how the blood vessels that supply your heart muscle can become narrowed or blocked, how this change affects your heart, what symptoms it can cause and how it can be treated with medication and surgery.

Your heart is a fantastic organ (see figure 1.1). It is basically a muscular pump that can beat more than 100,000 times a day. Your heart pushes blood round your body to supply it with oxygen and nutrients.

CHD, MI, angina, coronary arteries, angiogram, stent, bypass surgery—it's a foreign language!



It also receives a supply of vital, oxygen-rich blood. A large blood vessel, called the aorta, carries blood from the heart to the body. Close to where the aorta leaves the heart, small blood vessels, called coronary arteries, branch off and feed back into the heart muscle. Each time the heart beats, about 4 to 5 percent of the blood being pumped is pushed into the coronary arteries and supplies the heart itself; the rest goes round the body.

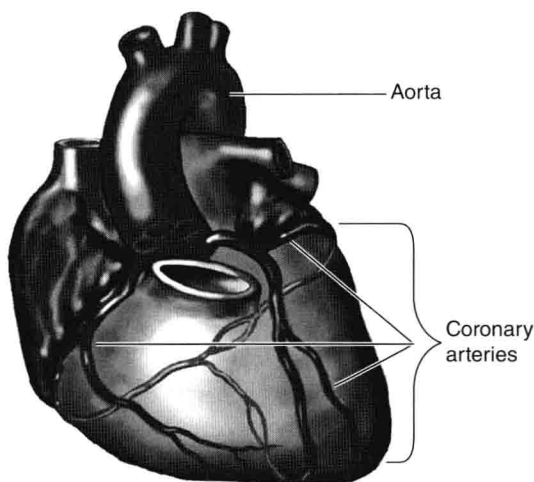


Figure 1.1 The coronary arterial system.

Defining Coronary Heart Disease (CHD)

Coronary heart disease (CHD) occurs when the inside of the wall of the coronary artery is damaged. Damaged sections in the inner wall of the artery start to become coated with fatty fibrous material that starts to clog up the artery. This material is called fatty plaque.

Fatty plaque takes up space inside the artery and therefore less space exists for blood to flow through the artery. Consequently, the blood flow to the part of the heart muscle being supplied by that artery is reduced. This reduction in oxygen-rich blood flow can cause symptoms called angina. The damage to the inside of the artery wall causes inflammation in the artery, potentially causing the fatty plaque to burst. When the fatty plaque bursts, a blood clot forms and it can block the blood flow completely. If the coronary artery is blocked completely, a heart attack can occur.



Picture This

Imagine that the hosepipe is your coronary artery, the water is blood and the grass is your heart. Pretend it's a good summer and there hasn't been any rain for a long time.

- You run a hosepipe into your garden to supply your grass with water.
- Grit starts to damage the inside of the hosepipe and it becomes rough in places. Dirt starts to gather at the rough area and the hosepipe is narrowed.
- Less water is flowing and the grass begins to suffer (angina).
- If the hosepipe blocks completely there will be no water supply and the grass will wither (heart attack).
- If the pipe is blocked for a very short period and the water starts flowing again quickly, the grass can recover (which is what happens if you get to hospital quickly).
- The longer the pipe is blocked, the more grass that is affected. If the pipe is blocked for a longer time, then some of the grass will die and never recover (damage to the heart muscle).

Angina

The narrowing effect of CHD reduces blood flow to the heart and can cause angina. Angina is the name given to the many symptoms that people feel when the heart isn't getting enough blood supply and therefore not enough oxygen is getting to the heart. Angina is the heart's way of telling you it needs more oxygen. Medical professionals often call angina *chest pain*, but many people do not feel pain. People feel angina in various ways and it can be severe or mild. All of this is confusing. Let's clear up the confusion by looking at many of the ways that you can feel angina.

How Can Angina Feel?

Discomfort in the centre of the chest
 Heaviness or tightness in the chest
 A dull ache in the chest
 Heartburn or indigestion
 Heaviness across the front of one or both shoulders
 Pain or heaviness in one or both arms
 Discomfort in the jaw
 Heaviness in the throat
 Discomfort between the shoulder blades
 Undue or unexpected shortness of breath*

*If you have a lung condition and you are struggling to tell the difference between your lung symptoms and potential heart symptoms, discuss this with your doctor, practice nurse or cardiac rehabilitation professional.

Remember, there are lots of other things that can cause these symptoms, it might not be angina, but if you think it might be then use your GTN spray or tablets and discuss it with your doctor, practice nurse or cardiac rehabilitation team.

What to Do if You Think You Are Having Angina

If you have these symptoms and you think it could be angina, then take these steps:

1. Stop what you are doing.
2. Sit down, relax and take a few slow, deep breaths.
3. If you have a glyceryl trinitrate* (GTN) spray or tablet, use it under your tongue in the way your doctor, cardiac rehabilitation professional or pharmacist taught you. Guidelines would suggest that you take the spray and wait 5 minutes, then if your symptoms have not gone away take the spray again and wait 5 minutes. Then, if your symptoms have not gone away, call for an ambulance.
- 4a. If your symptoms have gone away within 15 minutes, it has not done any harm. However, you should discuss it with your doctor or cardiac rehabilitation professional. It may be possible to change the dosage or type of your medication to stop you from having angina.
- 4b. If your symptoms have not gone away within 15 minutes, phone for an ambulance *immediately* and stay resting until it arrives.
5. If you are not allergic to aspirin and someone is there to help you, chew an adult aspirin tablet (300 mg). Chewing, rather than swallowing the tablet whole, gets the medicine into your bloodstream faster. If you don't have an aspirin or you don't know if you are allergic to it, just stay sitting until the ambulance arrives.

*Glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray is a medicine that you spray under your tongue to relieve angina. Some people have GTN tablets instead. The tablets also go under your tongue and can be removed when your angina symptoms go away. If you have a GTN spray or tablet and you're not sure how much you should use, then you must speak with your doctor, practice nurse or cardiac rehab team immediately.

There are some common myths and misconceptions about angina (see table 1.1), so learning about these myths will help you understand angina further.

TABLE 1.1 Common Myths and Facts About Angina

Common myth or misconception	Fact
Angina is like a small heart attack.	Angina does not damage your heart if it subsides with rest or with use of glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) and lasts no more than 15 min.
If I use my GTN and the feeling I had wasn't angina, I'll do myself harm.	The effects of GTN last for only 30 min. It can give you a headache or make you feel a little lightheaded, but if used properly it cannot cause you any harm.
My symptoms are only a bit uncomfortable. It's not that bad, so I should wait until it gets bad.	People are used to putting up with a certain amount of pain (they wait until a headache is bad before they take pain killers). However, angina is different; if you feel it you must treat it immediately.
I can become dependent on GTN.	GTN is not addictive and you cannot become dependent on it.

Heart Attack

When a coronary artery is blocked completely and suddenly, causing the area of the heart muscle normally supplied by that artery to be starved of blood and oxygen, this area of heart muscle can be damaged. This event is called a heart attack, also known as a myocardial infarction (MI). A heart attack can feel just like angina: the symptoms can be quite mild or intense and severe. If you are having a heart attack, you might feel tightness, heaviness or pain in your chest, which may spread to your arms, neck, jaw, back or stomach. Some people who are having a heart attack feel short of breath, start to sweat, feel lightheaded or dizzy. Some people feel sick, vomit or have persistent indigestion. The symptoms felt during a heart attack do not go away fully with GTN. The longer the artery is blocked before getting to hospital for treatment, the more likely that heart damage will occur. Therefore, if you are having a heart attack it is crucial to phone an ambulance and get to hospital as quickly as possible

Remember the image of watering the grass? When the water supply is fixed quickly, the grass can recover with no damage. Time is very important! So, if you use your GTN and it doesn't work, phone an ambulance immediately.

There are some common myths and misconceptions about heart attacks (see table 1.2), so learning about these myths will help you understand heart attacks further.

TABLE 1.2 Common Myths and Facts About Heart Attacks

Common myth or misconception	Fact
A heart attack is crushing chest pain (like you may have seen on a poster or on the television).	It may feel that way sometimes but not always. It can be much milder. Remember, if the symptoms don't go away fully with use of GTN, phone for an ambulance.
During a heart attack, the heart stops beating.	Some people confuse the terms heart attack and cardiac arrest. Cardiac arrest occurs when the heart stops beating. Sometimes the heart stops beating during a heart attack, but not always.
Once you have a heart attack, the damage is done.	The sooner you get to hospital for treatment the more likely doctors can save your heart muscle. Heart muscle cells can repair themselves if treatment is started right away to restore blood flow and limit damage.

Treating CHD

Your lifestyle plays a big part in treating CHD and protecting your heart. This aspect of treatment is discussed in detail in the chapters to follow. This section describes medication and possible surgical interventions that can be used to treat CHD.

