

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Sex after a heart attack
- Stroke signs
- Overnight Oatmeal
- Women Stroke Prevention



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When can I have Sex after a Heart Attack?

Sex. Always a little bit of a touchy subject. It is private and sometimes difficult to talk about with strangers. It may not be the first thing on your mind after a heart attack, and therefore may not be discussed before you leave the hospital. You are just happy to be alive at that point, right? It may not get asked at your first follow up visit either, for a number of reasons. However, at some point, sooner than later you are going to want to have sex again. This brings us to the question, when is it safe to resume sex after a heart attack? There is more to this question than just an easy answer so lets take a look at it.

The effects of sexual activity on the heart have been studied over the years. According to the literature, the average person has only a mild elevation in heart rate and blood pressure during

foreplay, but during an orgasm, the heart rate and blood pressure have a peak for about 10-15 seconds (1). The average person's heart rate increased to about 130 beats



a minute and the blood pressure increased to about 170 mmHg systolic (1). This elevation in heart rate and blood pressure poses some mild strain on the heart which increases the risk for heart attack. Let's put this in

perspective. Based on four separate studies, the overall relative risk of heart attack during sex was about 2.7 percent (1). However, in the studies available, there was no increase between people who had heart attacks in the past and in people who had no known heart disease (1). That is good news for those of you reading this article that have had a heart attack. Another astonishing finding is that less than 1 percent of heart attacks are related to sex (1). Within those studies, people who exercised were at much lower risk of heart attack during sex than their counterparts who did not exercise routinely (1). Regular exercise and physical activity gets the heart in shape. When the heart is in shape, there is less increase in heart rate and blood pressure during physical activity.

What I like to ask patients is when was the last time you had sex? Many answer within the last days, weeks, or months before their heart attack. Do you think you were safer before or after you had the heart attack? In most cases, people are actually safer after the heart attack because they have had a blockage fixed either by stent, angioplasty, or bypass. There may be more blood flow to the heart now than there was a week ago. Now that doesn't mean to have sex the day you get home from the hospital. Your heart has been broken, weakened, and scarred. Unlike a broken leg, we cannot put a cast around your heart. We do have to allow time for it to recover, get used to medications, and heal.

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Tip of the Month

Recognizing Stroke Symptoms:

Remember the acronym FAST to help recognize a stroke.

F: Facial Drooping or numbness. Ask the person to smile.

A: Arm weakness or numbness. Ask the person to raise the arms, does one arm drift downward or fall?

S: Speech difficulty. Is the speech garbled or difficult to understand. Ask them to repeat a small sentence.

T: Time is important. If one or all of these symptoms are present, call 911. Check the time so you know when the symptoms first occurred. (2).



Recipe adapted from the overnight oats recipe listed in the article “Good eats: 3 Busy Girl Breakfasts” by Allison Norton.

Oats for Breakfast

Ingredients:

1\3 cup regular oats
 1 cup almond milk
 1 banana
 1\4 tsp pure vanilla extract
 1 tablespoon peanut butter (all natural)
 1 teaspoon sugar free syrup
 Pinch of cinnamon

Directions:

1. Mix oats, almond milk, banana, and vanilla flavoring in a bowl.
2. Refrigerate overnight
3. Add peanut butter
4. Add syrup
5. Enjoy

Health Information

Serving size: 1 bowl
 Calories: 400
 Total Fat: 13.4 g
 Sat Fat 2 g
 Sodium 222 mg
 Cholesterol 0 mg
 Carbs 67 g
 Protein 8.8 g
 Sugars 23 g
 Fiber 8 g
 Potassium 799 mg

Quote of the Month: “If you do what you’ve always done, you’ll get what you’ve always gotten” Tony Robbins.

Bible Verse of the Month: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” Romans 12:21.

Did you Know?



Did you know that women have more strokes than men? Strokes kill more women than men as well. It is the third leading cause of death in women. About 55,000 more women than men have a stroke each year. Because of these staggering statistics, the American Heart Association and American Stroke Association have come out with new guidelines on ways to lower stroke risks in women. Women have some different risks posed to them when compared to their male cohorts. These include pregnancy, birth control, and hormone replacement therapy. Pregnancy increases the risk of stroke in women, especially if the blood pressure is not controlled. It is important to have the blood pressure checked with every visit and take prescribed blood pressure medication if needed.

If high blood pressure develops during pregnancy (preeclampsia), an aspirin may be indicated in the second and third trimester to lower stroke risk. Birth control may double the risk of stroke, especially in women with high blood pressure. Smoking should also be avoided while on birth control as that further increases the stroke risk. Hormone therapy was once thought to lower stroke risk, however in some cases it can increase the risk. Atrial fibrillation has long been known to cause strokes. This abnormal heart rhythm can be asymptomatic so the new recommendation is for all women to be screened for atrial fibrillation if they are over the age of 75. This can be done by a pulse check by your primary healthcare provider and an EKG if needed. The entire set of guidelines can be found at www.stroke.org. (3).



This initial process starts in the hospital which is why your doctor kept you in there for a couple days , maybe more, just letting you recover and monitoring your heart very closely during this time. After this monitoring period, at some point you are deemed safe to go home. In most cases, cardiac rehabilitation is recommended or some form of exercise program which usually commences in days to weeks after discharge. This physical activity sort of tests the heart for sexual activity. In most individuals, the workload on the heart during sex is similar to doing about 2 flights of stairs, or for a fairly inactive person, maybe 3 flights of stairs. According to the AHA Scientific Statement that was published in January 2012, “Sexual activity is reasonable 1 or more weeks after uncomplicated myocardial infarction if the patient is without cardiac symptoms during mild to moderate activity” (1). Now if you cannot perform physical activity without chest pain, shortness of breath, palpitations, dizziness, passing out, or feeling very tired, it may not be time to resume sexual activity and you will need to have a discussion with your provider. There may be other options or medications that can improve your symptoms after a heart attack. Sometimes it just takes more time to recover and every individual is different.

You may not have had a heart attack but you may have had a stent placed or had open heart surgery. Do the same rules apply? If you have had a recent stent, and all of your significant blockages were fixed with a stent or angioplasty, the AHA guidelines state “sexual activity may be resumed within several days if vascular access is healed or 6-8 weeks after coronary artery bypass grafting if the sternotomy site is healed” (1). Now, if there were blockages not fixed, a stress test may be recommended prior to clearing you for sexual activity.

Some tips to leave you with. Exercise regularly as this has been shown to significantly reduce your heart risk during sex. If you can go up 2-3 flights of stairs without any symptoms, that is a good sign that your heart is ready for sexual activity. Wait approximately 2 hours after eating a meal before engaging in sexual activity. Avoid alcohol as it may further raise your heart rate during sex or increase your risk of having an abnormal rhythm. Last, just try to relax and enjoy. You are probably doing all the right things if you are reading this article. As always, ask your healthcare provider before resuming sex if you have been diagnosed with a heart condition.