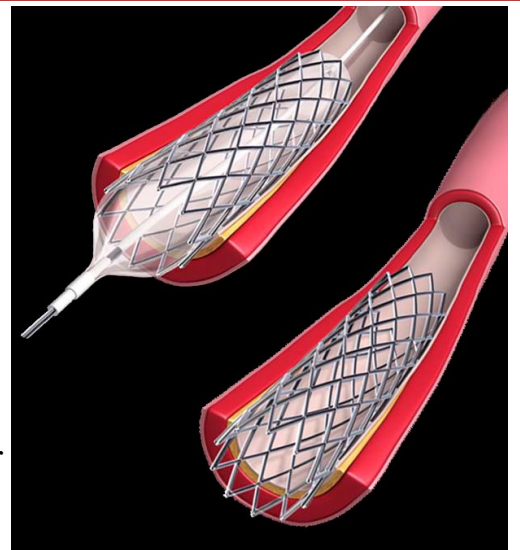


# Stent

**Having a “Stent” placed is a primary diagnosis for the Cardiac Rehab Program. Patients can start cardiac rehab two weeks after having a stent.**

As you age, a waxy substance called plaque can build up inside your arteries. This condition is called atherosclerosis. Atherosclerosis can affect any artery in the body. When atherosclerosis affects the coronary arteries, the condition is called coronary heart disease (CHD) or coronary artery disease. Over time, plaque can harden or rupture (break open). Hardened plaque narrows the coronary arteries and reduces the flow of



oxygen-rich blood to the heart. This can cause chest pain or discomfort called angina. If the plaque ruptures, a blood clot can form on its surface. A large blood clot can mostly or completely block blood flow through a coronary artery. This is the most common cause of a heart attack.

- Over time, ruptured plaque also hardens and narrows the coronary arteries. To open a nar-
- rowed artery, a doctor may do a procedure called a percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI).
- A stent is a tiny wire mesh tube. It props open an artery and is left there permanently. Stents help keep coronary arteries open and reduce the chance of a heart attack.

## Placing a Stent

When a stent is used, it's collapsed and put over a balloon catheter. It's then moved into the area of the blockage. When the balloon is inflated, the stent expands, locks in place and forms a scaffold. This holds the artery open. The stent stays in the artery permanently and holds it open. This improves blood flow to the heart muscle and relieves symptoms (usually chest pain). Stents are used depending on certain features of the artery blockage. Factors that affect whether a stent can be used include the size of the artery and where the blockage is.

## Following Stent Placement

Patients who've had a stent procedure must take one or more blood-thinning agents. Examples are aspirin and clopidogrel. These medications help reduce the risk of a blood clot developing in the stent and blocking the artery. Your physician will prescribe the medicine that is best for you.

### What to Expect After a Stent?

Following a short recovery in the hospital where the procedure was performed, you will continue to recover at home. When your doctor thinks you're ready to leave the hospital, you'll get instructions to follow at home, such as:

- How much activity or exercise you can do.
- When you should follow up with your doctor
- What medicines you should take
- What you should look for daily when checking for signs of infection around the catheter insertion site. Signs of infection include redness, swelling, and drainage.
- When you should call your doctor
- When you should call 911

Most people recover quickly and return to work within a week of leaving the hospital. Your doctor will want to check your progress after you leave the hospital. During the follow-up visit, your doctor will examine you, make changes to your medicines (if needed), do any necessary tests, and check your overall recovery. Use this time to ask questions you may have about activities, medicines, or lifestyle changes, or to talk about any other issues that concern you.

### Prevention and Continued Recovery

Although having a stent can reduce the symptoms of CHD, it isn't a cure for CHD or the risk factors that led to it. Making healthy lifestyle changes can help treat CHD and maintain the good results. Lifestyle changes might include changing your diet, quitting smoking, being physically active, losing weight or maintaining a healthy weight, and reducing stress. Your doctor may recommend cardiac rehabilitation (rehab). Cardiac rehab is a medically supervised program that helps improve the health and well-being of people who have heart problems. Cardiac rehab includes exercise training, education on heart healthy living, and counseling to reduce stress and help you return to an active life. Your doctor can tell you where to find a cardiac rehab program near your home.