



Study Supports Benefits of Rehab

12/22/2009
Associated Press

If you have had a heart attack or a bypass operation, there is an easy way to help prevent another one: stick with rehab.

People who complete all 36 sessions of cardiac rehabilitation are less likely to die or suffer a heart attack in the next three to four years than people who have fewer sessions. Most Medicare plans cover the 36 sessions.

Only about one-fifth of heart patients even try rehab. Of those who do, few complete all the sessions that are recommended.

The new study is one of the first big efforts to look at how survival is affected by the length of rehab heart patients complete. Researchers saw a clear trend in this 65-and-older group.

“What this study shows in a very convincing manner is that the more sessions a cardiac patient goes to, the better off they are,” said Dr. Stanley Hazen, preventive cardiology and rehabilitation chief at the Cleveland Clinic, and had no role in the research.

The word ‘rehab’ causes many people to envision the wrong exercise scenario. It is not to be grueling or painful. The key is to find something you enjoy and are willing to do. A brisk walk, a stationery bike or swimming are healthy options.

To be covered by Medicare, rehab also must include lifestyle counseling—nutrition advice, weight management, help to stop smoking, even cooking classes and pointers on reducing stress.

Many patients find they enjoy the counseling. For some, it is the first time anyone has explained the how-to of healthy living.

