

Putting Life In Your Years

Cardiac and Pulmonary Rehabilitation at Renker Wellness Center

When Abraham Lincoln said, “It’s not the years in your life that count; it’s the life in your years,” he could have been talking about people who live with coronary artery disease (CAD) or pulmonary (lung) disease.

If either of these health conditions has you or a loved one feeling sidelined from participating fully in life, the Renker Wellness Center has just what the doctor ordered. The Tamkin Cardiac Wellness Program and the Tamkin Pulmonary Wellness Program offer comprehensive exercise and education regimens that can dramatically improve the quality of participants’ lives, putting “life in their years.”

“The Cardiac Wellness Program is for patients with coronary artery disease who have had an intervention, such as angioplasty, stent placement or open heart surgery,” explains Cindy Olson, Director, Cardiac Services. It consists of eight to 12 weeks of medically-supervised aerobic exercise and weight training three times a week, during which time the heart is carefully monitored. “The exercise component is individualized based on each participant’s condition,” she adds.

The Cardiac Wellness Program also includes educational sessions that address heart disease risk factors, medication management, nutrition, stress management and exercise principles. Other available classes include support sessions for cardiac patients who take anticoagulation medication, as well as, sessions for those with diabetes and heart failure.

“Coronary artery disease is a lifelong condition that isn’t cured with surgery,” Olson notes. “But through aggressive risk reduction and behavior modification strategies offered through a cardiac rehabilitation program like ours, patients can achieve a healthier quality of life and understand how they can live as fully as possible with their diagnosis.”

Typically, patients who complete the Cardiac Wellness Program are able to do 40 minutes of aerobic exercise and 10 minutes of light free-weight strengthening. An estimated 40 percent of “graduates” remain members of the Renker Wellness Center gym, working with a personal trainer to maintain their cardiac fitness (see sidebar for information on gym membership).

Most importantly, cardiac rehabilitation works. Research published in December 2009 in the American Heart Association's medical journal *Circulation* tracked more than 30,000 Medicare patients over age 65 for four years. The study found that patients who completed 36 sessions of rehabilitation had a 47 percent reduction in the risk of death from any cause, and 31 percent risk reduction for a heart attack in the subsequent four years, compared with those who attended just one session. “These are the potential benefits for patients who choose to take part in the Tamkin Cardiac Wellness Program,” says Olson.

“For people with lung disease, the Tamkin Pulmonary Wellness Program offers a similar but slightly different approach,” says Julia Dugan, RN, RCP, BS, Coordinator of Pulmonary Rehabilitation at the Renker Wellness Center.

“We primarily work with patients who have chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD) and pulmonary fibrosis,” she explains. “Many are on oxygen, and they usually are far more de-conditioned than our cardiac patients. They haven’t had an acute event like a heart attack, but they’ve been living with impaired breathing for some time. And the less they move, the weaker they get.”

“We show them that they can exercise,” Dugan continues. “Yes, they’ll feel breathless, but we teach them how to pace themselves, to monitor their breathlessness, and we teach breathing techniques to help them manage it.”

Pulmonary rehabilitation patients attend exercise sessions three days a week for eight weeks, doing 30 minutes of aerobic exercise as well as 30 minutes of balance and strengthening exercises. Educational classes are also a part of the program, addressing such topics as anatomy, physiology, activities of daily living, travel, medication and oxygen management, nutrition, coping skills and transition-of-life issues.

“We work closely with each patient’s pulmonologist, as well as with each cardiac patient’s cardiologist, and regularly communicate about their patient’s progress,” Dugan says.

“But the real beauty of these programs is the peer-to-peer camaraderie and communication,” says Olson, referring to patients with coronary artery disease. “It’s vital to their success in living with their disease, having a network of people to talk with.”

“It’s the same for pulmonary patients,” Dugan adds. “When someone comes in wearing an oxygen tank and sees others doing things they never thought they could begin to do, it changes their life. That group dynamic is a big part of why they’re successful as they encourage and even compete with one another in a very healthy way.”

Notably, the Renker Wellness Center programs are among a select five percent of the nation’s cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation programs to be dually accredited by the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary Rehabilitation (AACVPR), which provides the only peer-reviewed accreditation process in the field in the United States. This means Eisenhower’s programs have met rigorous national standards for patient safety and treatment protocols.

These programs also consistently earn high marks from patients through Press Ganey®, the leading organization that measures patient satisfaction in health care facilities.

For more information about the Tamkin Cardiac Wellness Program, call 760-773-2030, and for the Tamkin Pulmonary Wellness Program, call 760-773-2031. A physician referral is necessary to participate in either program, and both are covered by insurance.

The Eisenhower Renker Wellness Center

Graduates of Eisenhower's cardiac and pulmonary rehabilitation programs, as well as anyone who simply wants to stay fit and active, may join the Renker Wellness Center and utilize our outstanding health and fitness resources.

Membership: \$66 per month (includes full use of facilities and all Center-sponsored classes); \$83 initial one-time evaluation/orientation fee

Hours: Monday through Friday, 5:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. (closed noon to 1 p.m.) Saturday, 7 a.m. to noon; Sunday, closed.

HealthNotes is a publication of Eisenhower Medical Center · © Copyright 2015 All Rights Reserved · www.emc.org