

# My healthy heart journey

## *Tohu hauora manawa haerenga*

In hospital and what to expect after leaving hospital



The koru symbolises new life, growth and strength and peace.

This double koru is a symbol of two lives working together (you and your whānau and the health care team).

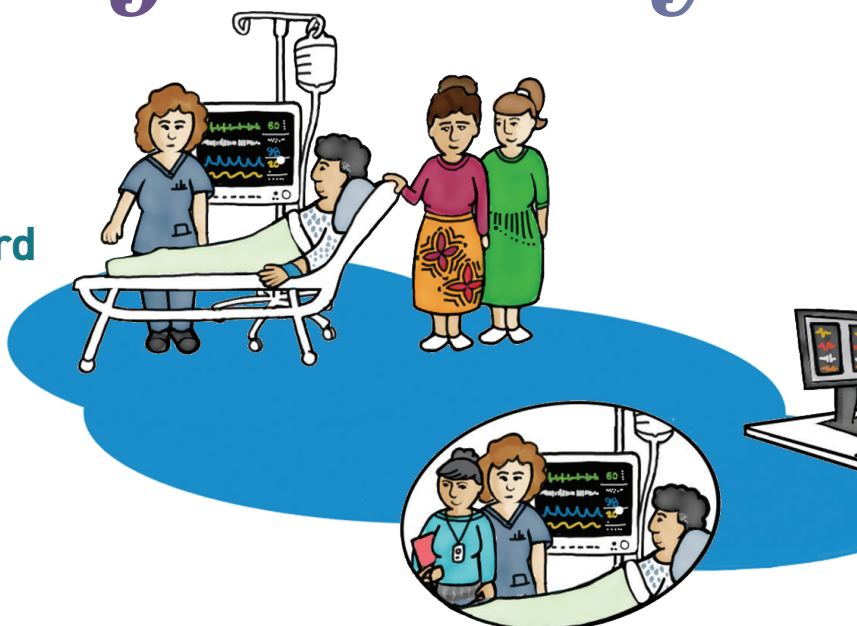
Supporting you and your whānau to learn more about your heart, your hospital journey, and the support available to you when you leave the hospital

**Bring this booklet with you when you see your heart team**

# My heart journey

What to expect in hospital  
and when you go home

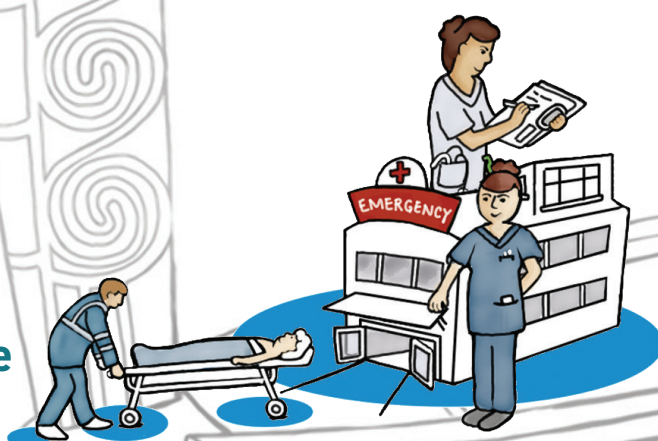
Heart ward



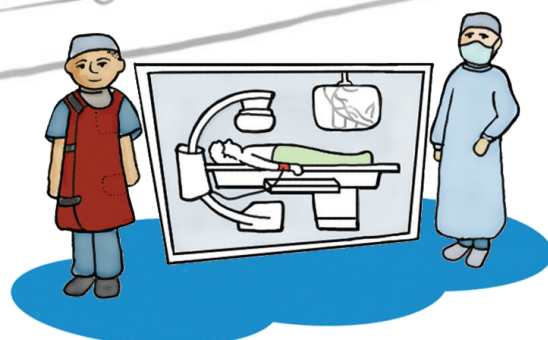
Coronary care  
Close monitoring



Urgent care



Cath lab



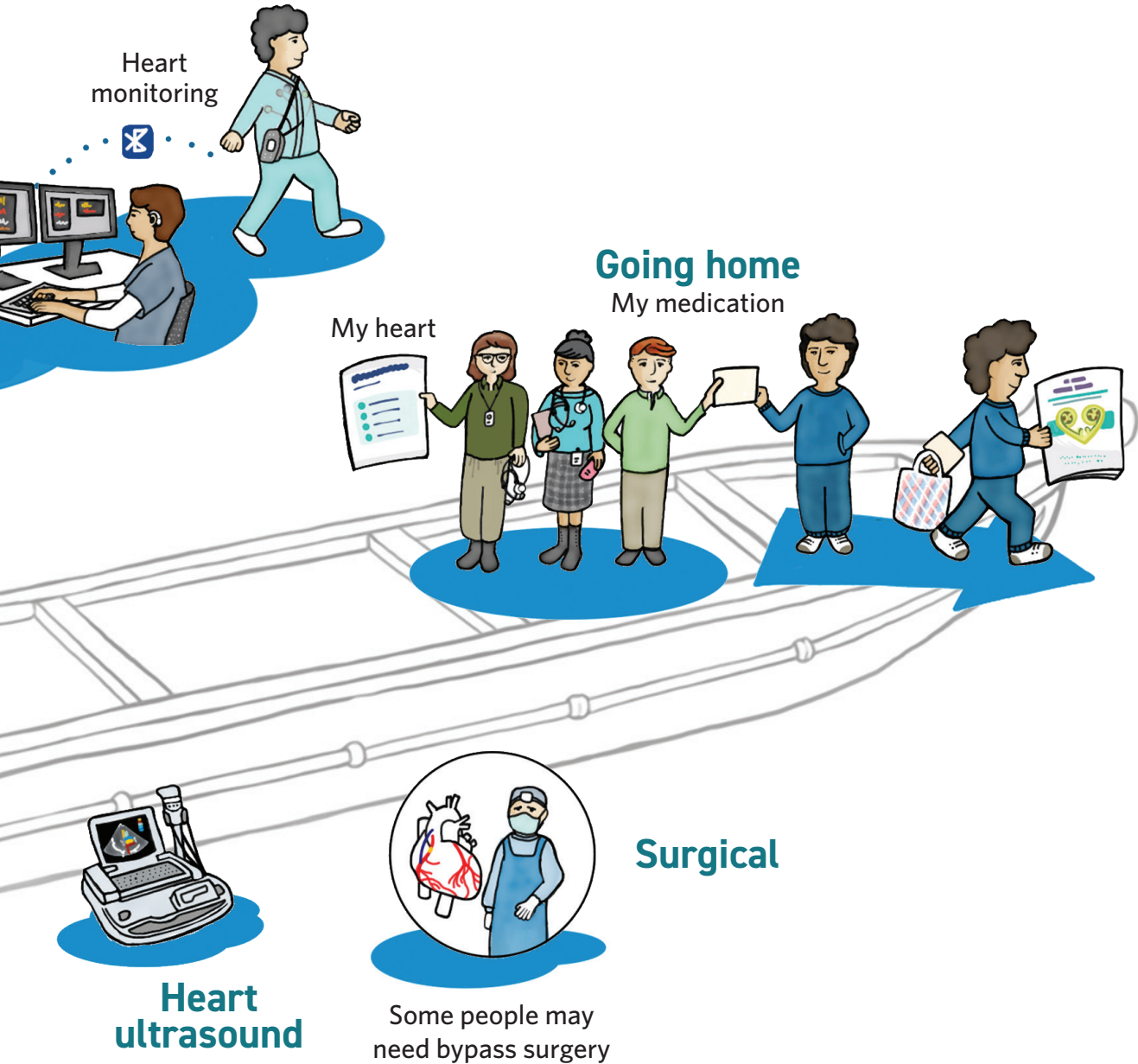
Angiogram (Some patients  
may need a stent)

Admission

My care and heart tests

During your hospital stay you will have a heart scan and an angiogram to look for heart artery narrowing or blockage. Treatment options will be discussed with you including starting medicines.

*He waka eke noa*  
A canoe which we are all in with no exception



**Discharge**

**After hospital**

Please refer to page 9-10 for further information on support in the community.

Before you leave hospital, ways to protect your heart, medicines, exercise, healthy eating and what to expect following a heart event will be discussed with you and your whānau.

# My heart condition

Your heart pumps blood to your body, but it needs its own blood too! So your heart has its own arteries. If your heart arteries get narrowed or blocked, you can experience a heart event, such as a heart attack.

## Your heart diagram

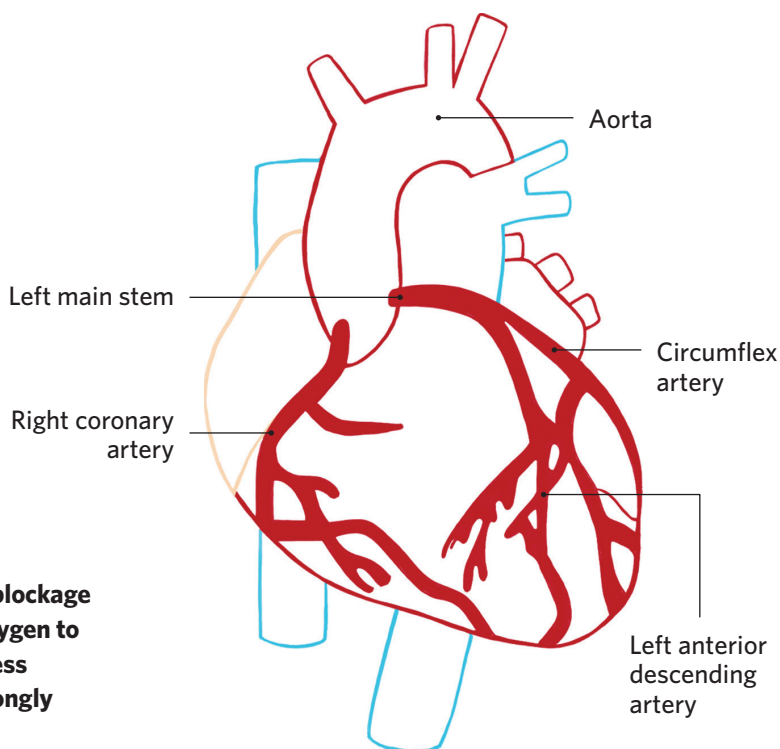
Together with you and your whānau, your doctor or nurse will help you mark the place that caused your heart event on the picture. Three things can lead to your heart arteries narrowing or getting blocked, and cause a heart event:

- Fatty build-up inside an artery
- An artery spasm (temporary tightening of the wall muscle that reduces blood flow)
- Dissection (a tear in the inner layer of artery)



## Heart ultrasound

When your heart event happened, the narrowing or blockage of your heart artery may have reduced the flow of oxygen to your heart muscle. This can make your heart pump less effectively. A heart ultrasound will measure how strongly your heart is pumping.



Your heart ultrasound found that your heart pumping strength (known as 'left ventricular ejection fraction') is:

Normal (50-70%)

Mildly down (41-49%)

Reduced (40% or less)

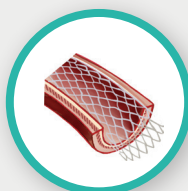


## Your treatment plan to improve your heart function



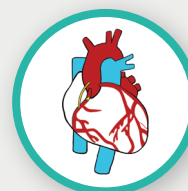
### Medication

To reduce the risk of another heart event



### Cardiac stent/balloon angioplasty

A common surgery to open up narrowed heart arteries and improve blood flow using a stent (small tube) or tiny balloon



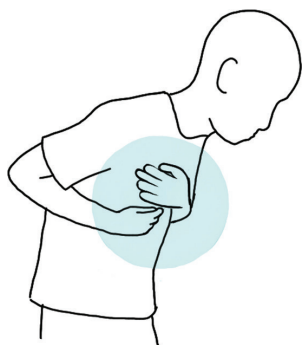
### Coronary artery bypass surgery

A common surgery using arteries or veins from other parts of your body to create a bypass around a blocked artery

# My heart symptoms

Heart symptoms are different for everyone. What were the heart symptoms you experienced before you came to hospital?

(Please tick all symptoms you felt)



Chest discomfort



Jaw, neck or back discomfort



Shoulder or arm discomfort



Nausea or vomiting



Light-headedness or dizziness



Shortness of breath

## My other symptoms:



Unusual tiredness



Cold sweats



Heartburn or tummy discomfort



Anything else?

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## My heart

- I know what steps to take if I have the same heart symptoms
- (If given one:) I know how to use the glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) spray (red bottle) to relieve heart symptoms

**Talk with your family doctor (GP) within 1-2 days if you are experiencing the same heart symptoms or using your GTN spray more frequently.**



# Protecting my heart

**Lots of things may have led to your heart event. These things are known as 'risk factors'. They can increase fatty build-up in your heart arteries, and maybe lead to future heart events. You can help improve them.**

**My heart risk factors are (please tick):**

Family history

Smoking

High blood pressure

Diabetes

Lack of activity

High cholesterol

Increased weight

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

## What I can do

There are health goals you can work on to protect your heart. Lowering your cholesterol, controlling your blood pressure and managing your diabetes (by controlling glucose levels) reduces your risk of future heart events. Remaining physically active, quitting smoking and taking your heart medicines also protects your heart.

**Control my blood glucose**

\*(An HbA1c = three-monthly average of glucose control)

My recent HbA1c level is:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Target range:**

For people with type 2 diabetes: less than 53 mmol/mol

For people that do not have diabetes: less than 41 mmol/mol



**Lower my LDL cholesterol level**

\*(LDL = bad cholesterol)

My current LDL cholesterol level is:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Target range:** less than

1.4 mmol/L

**Lower/control my blood pressure**

My most recent blood pressure is:

\_\_\_\_\_

**Target range:** less than or equal

to 130/80 mmHg



Take my medication



Healthy eating



Be active for 30 minutes, most days of the week



Healthy weight



Quit smoking



## My heart

I have had my questions answered about my heart event. Please write further questions on page 9 for health professional to address with you and your whānau

I have made a health goal to begin to address my heart risk factors

**Talk with your whānau about your heart risk factors and ways to protect your heart**

Things that can help keep me motivated as I work towards my health goals:

\_\_\_\_\_

# Medication to protect my heart

You may require a few different medications to recover, stay healthy and to prevent another heart event. This page helps you understand what medications you will be on.

**Dual anti-platelets**

stop harmful blood clots from forming, which can cause a heart attack

**Aspirin (life-long)** and

WRITE HERE

for \_\_\_\_\_ months  
protects my stent and prevents blood clots

**With/without**



**Stomach protection**

WRITE HERE

for \_\_\_\_\_ months/long term

**Statin (life-long)**

reduces cholesterol and fatty build-up that slows blood flow

WRITE HERE

**Angiotensin receptor**

**blockers/ACE inhibitors (life-long)**

relax and widen my blood vessels and lower my blood pressure to lower stress on the heart muscle

WRITE HERE

**Beta-blockers (life-long)**

relax and widen my blood vessels and lower my blood pressure to lower stress on the heart muscle

WRITE HERE

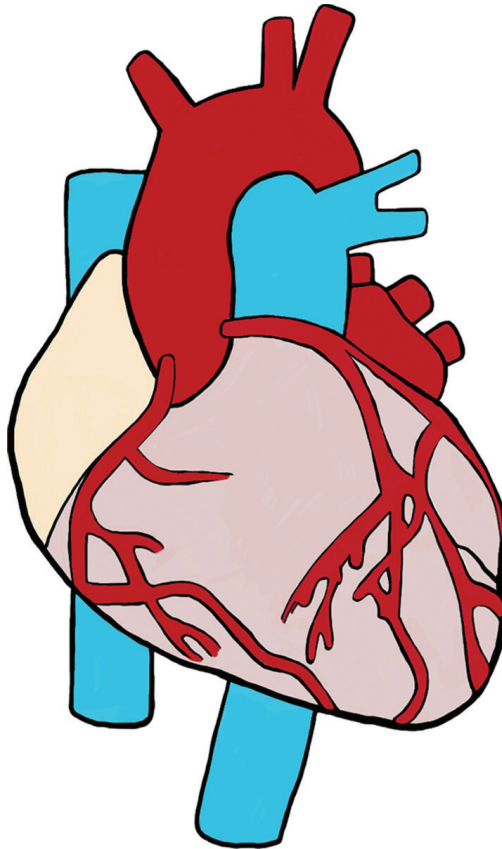
**My additional heart medication:**

WRITE HERE

WRITE HERE

WRITE HERE

WRITE HERE



## My medication

I understand that most of my medicines are prescribed life-long

I have a regular pharmacy I go to to support me with my new medicines

I know what side effects to report to the health care team

I feel confident about managing my medicines at home

I have strategies in place to take medication everyday, eg, whānau support, blister pack/pill boxes, phone reminders/apps

**If you have further questions about your heart medicine, please speak to a health professional (pharmacist, doctor, nurse) who will be happy to answer your questions.**

# Healthy eating

1

**Aim for a variety of different-coloured vegetables (at least five servings) and fruit (two servings) per day.**

Include wholegrain foods, eg, wheat biscuits, porridge, wholemeal breads, wholegrain cereal and brown rice.



2

**Herbs and spices** to flavour foods, instead of adding salt.



3

**Eat a variety of healthy protein** sources including fish, seafood, lentils, beans and chickpeas. Try introducing one meat-free meal a week. Limit red meat if possible.



4

Choose **unflavoured dairy foods** (eg, plain yoghurt, unflavoured milk and cottage cheese). Aim for lower-fat varieties.



5

**Make healthy fat choices.** Choose nuts, seeds and avocado as healthy fat alternates. Use plant-based oils for cooking, instead of butter, ghee and lard, for example.



6

**Where possible choose water as your main drink.** If having fizzy/soft drink, choose a sugar-free option.



**A healthy eating pattern starts by making small changes that can last over a long period of time. It can be helpful to focus on one or two changes you would like to start with.**

Write down one thing you are going to start with today:

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# Moving for a healthy heart

Moving regularly and exercise helps your heart improve and become stronger. You can start moving from day one.

1

Measure your progress over weeks not days.

2

Set yourself up with a daily and weekly plan. Walking is the best place to start, for example, 2 x 5 minute walks per day building up to 10, 15 then 30 minutes over 3-4 weeks. Choose a moderate-level activity that you enjoy, such as swimming, mowing your lawn or sweeping.

3

During exercise, it is normal to breathe faster, feel your heart beating and get a bit sweaty. This is how you know you're exercising at a moderate intensity. It is important not to push yourself so hard that you feel too breathless to talk. This also applies to returning to sexual activity.

4

Your exercise starting point may be different from others, depending on what type of heart event you have had and how active you were before.

5

Exercise will get easier the more you do and your confidence will grow. You can progress your exercise by going slightly further or slightly faster.

6

If you experience chest discomfort or severe shortness of breath while exercising, stop, rest and talk to your GP in 1-2 days.

7

Start recording what you do to track your progress.



**If after 2-3 months you have not returned to your previous level of activity, please seek more specific advice from your heart team.**

# What to expect following your heart event

People often feel lots of different emotions after their heart event, such as feeling worried, grateful, overwhelmed, relieved, tearful, frightened, hopeless, shocked, lucky, on-edge or down. This is absolutely normal. You may have felt many of these emotions, and they can often change day to day.

Tick the facial expression(s) that best describe(s) how you are feeling:



Angry



Shocked



Sad



Overwhelmed



Relieved

**Finding ways to cope with the emotions you are experiencing after your heart event is important. What has helped you get through stressful times before? This might have been whānau or friends, community groups or engaging in hobbies and the things you love doing. These things can help you again.**

Three things that have helped me cope in the past: (please write below)

1

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2

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3

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**Acknowledging the impact**

**These three things you have mentioned are coping strategies; these might help you in dealing with your heart event.**

What else would be helpful in supporting me to deal with my concerns and worries? (please write below)

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I feel that I can cope well emotionally at home

I am worried I may find emotions overwhelming, at least sometimes

**Please talk to your nurse/doctor if you would like support arranged before going home.**

# My support plan

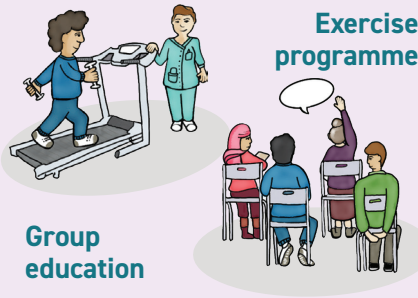
Support after you leave hospital is strongly recommended to help you meet your health goals and stay motivated. Here are three things to do.



GP visit

It is important to see **your GP within three weeks** of leaving hospital in order to check your symptoms and review your heart medication.

Make sure you plan to make an appointment.



Group education

**Cardiac rehabilitation** supports recovery and prevents further heart events. It helps you work towards your health goals and connects you with other people on the same journey.

**Cardiac rehabilitation** is strongly recommended by all Aotearoa New Zealand cardiologists.

**Talk to your doctor/nurse about an education or structured exercise programme available to you in your local area.**

Follow-up cardiology appointment



Your **heart follow-up appointment\*** will be arranged for you to review your symptoms, check that you're on the best doses of medication to protect your heart, and to organise any future tests that are important for your heart health.

**Look out for your clinic appointment letter in the post.**

\*See your hospital discharge summary for details of your follow-up plan.

**Be prepared.** What are your questions? You can speak to the doctors and nurses in the hospital or your cardiac rehabilitation nurse (contact details below):

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## My heart plan

I am enrolled with a family doctor (GP) and will arrange post-heart event review within three weeks

A heart follow-up clinic will be arranged

First cardiac rehabilitation appointment:

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### Additional support:

Support call/follow up with: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

My cardiac rehab nurse is: \_\_\_\_\_

Contact number: \_\_\_\_\_

# Important resources I can access

Learn as much as you can about your heart condition, healthy eating, exercise, sex and positive coping after a heart event.

## Heart Foundation:

- Living well after a heart attack booklet
- Heart Foundation website ([heartfoundation.org.nz](http://heartfoundation.org.nz))

## For health information and self-care resources:

- Healthify He Puna Waiora website (previously Health Navigator NZ) ([healthify.nz](http://healthify.nz))

## Helpful services:

- Green prescription (community exercise support)
- Quitline (quit smoking support)
- Community alcohol and drug services (CADS)

## Positive coping resources:

- 1737 - Need to Talk? Service: Free to call or text 24/7 for additional support
- Just a Thought - online learning tool
- Groov by Mentemia (phone app)
- Headspace (phone app)
- Mental Health Foundation website ([mentalhealth.org.nz](http://mentalhealth.org.nz))
- Wellness support via your family doctor (GP)

## Terms we use in this booklet

Most medical terms in this booklet are explained where they appear. Here are a few that are not:

- Coronary (heart)
- Ultrasound (a type of scan)
- Cath lab (where some heart-related tests and operations are done)
- Angiogram (a type of test)
- Artery (tube-like blood vessels)
- Cardiologists (heart doctors)



## Returning to my activities

- I can return to work in \_\_\_\_\_ /not applicable
- I can return to (private car) driving on: INSERT DATE /not applicable
- I cannot drive a commercial vehicle (truck/bus/taxi) until cardiology clearance/not applicable
- I understand how to safely return to activities (such as household tasks, exercise and work)

**Acknowledgments:** This resource was created by the Counties Manukau Cardiology team in partnership with ANZACS-QI, Manatū Hauora and Te Whatu Ora. Special thanks go to Te Kaahui Ora and the Cardiac Rehabilitation and Prevention Working Group; and to Te Tāhū Hauora Health Quality & Safety Commission for its support.