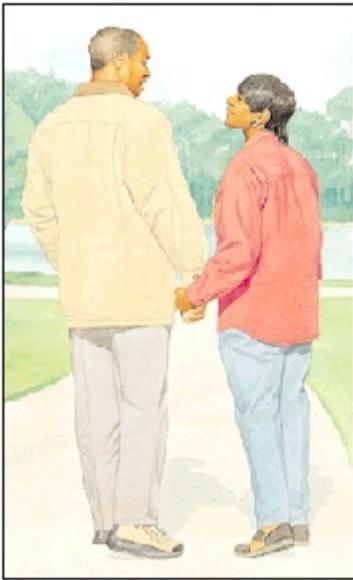


Intimacy and Heart Disease: Talking with Your Partner

An intimate relationship is built on being able to share feelings. The stress and worry of a heart attack or surgery can upset this closeness. It can even cause sexual problems that weren't there before. Talking honestly with your partner is the first step to rebuilding intimacy. The tips below can help you get started.

Notes to Your Partner

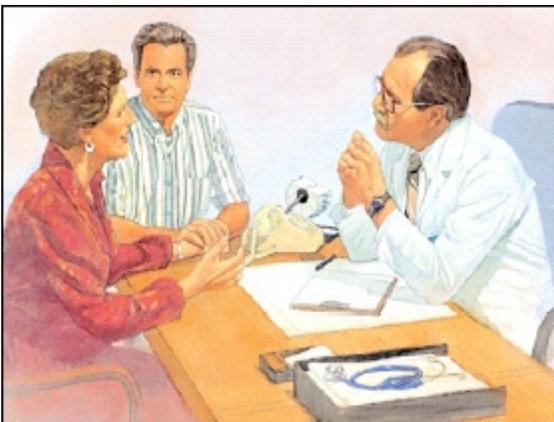
- Listen to what your partner says. Try to be patient and supportive.
- Talk openly about your own feelings, but don't blame them on your partner.
- Remember that both your feelings and your own will pass. But it's still important to talk about them.
- Know that having sex when you're both ready won't harm your partner.



Rebuilding Intimacy

Talking to your partner about your feelings may be hard for you. But keeping them to yourself can make both of you feel alone. To rebuild intimacy, you both need to talk openly. This will help each of you understand and work through your feelings. It will also help reduce stress. When you talk:

- Choose a time and a place when you are both relaxed.
- Listen to each other. Then acknowledge each other's concerns. Remember not to interrupt or criticize.
- Give each other support. This is a difficult time for both of you.



When to Get Help

You and your partner may find it hard to talk about feelings. Or you may not be able to understand each other's feelings. That's when another person can help.

- Try talking together with a doctor, nurse, or counselor. Or you might want to join a cardiac support group or talk with a friend or a minister, priest, or rabbi.

- If you feel depressed or have no desire for sex, talk to your doctor. Your medications may be affecting your desire or your ability to have sex.