

Women want doctors' help in facing fears about sex after heart attack

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Women think it would be easier to overcome their fears of sex after having a heart attack if their doctors gave them more information, according to new research in the *Journal of the American Heart Association*.

"Most women don't have discussions with their doctors about resuming sex after a [heart attack](#) even though many experience fear or other [sexual problems](#)," said Emily M. Abramsohn, M.P.H., the study's lead author and a researcher at the University of Chicago. "We wanted to get a better understanding of women's sexual recovery and how it could be improved."

Researchers surveyed 17 women in depth about their sex lives before and after their heart attacks. The women were selected from the TRIUMPH trial (Translational Research Investigating Underlying Disparities in Acute Myocardial Infarction Patients' Health Status), a large, multi-state study of health and sexual outcomes after heart attack.

The women, average 60 years old, were married or in long-term relationships. Researchers found that after their heart attacks:

- Most women and many of their partners were afraid to have sex again. They wondered when it was safe to resume sex and how much exertion their hearts could handle.
- Despite this fear, most women resumed having sex, many within

four weeks.

- Most women wanted to have sex to be close to their partner again and get back to a "normal" life.
- Of the few women who talked with their doctors about resuming sex, most initiated the discussion and were not happy with the quality of information they got.

Cardiologists could ease concerns about sex after a heart attack if they talked openly with their patients about what to expect, Abramsohn said. The discussion should start while the woman is still in the hospital and continue throughout her recovery with other members of her healthcare team.

"It's important for you and your partner to know you're not alone in your confusion and fear about returning to sex after a heart attack," Abramsohn said. "If your doctor isn't giving you information to help you feel more comfortable about it, it's important for you to ask them for it."

Provided by American Heart Association

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