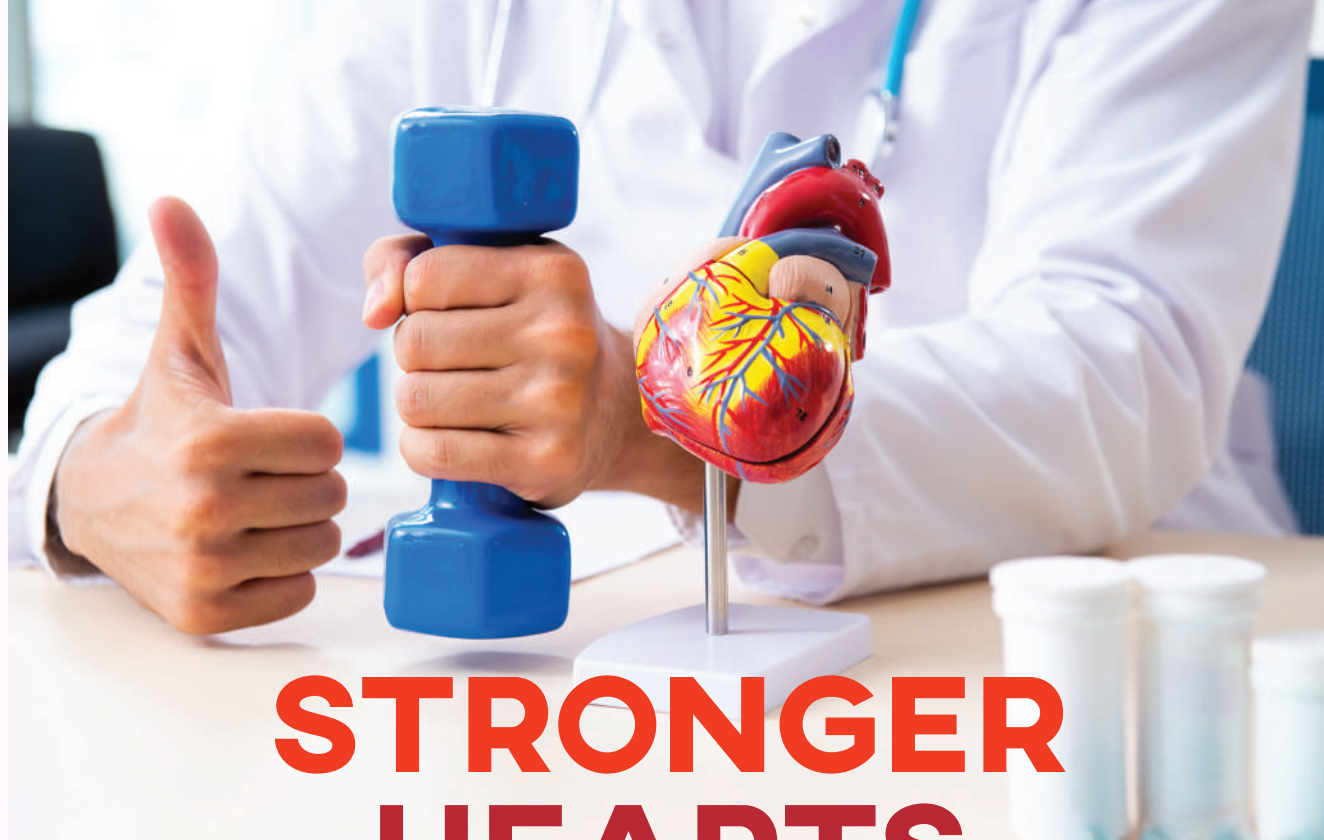




STRONGER HEARTS

Women's path to heart rehabilitation

In the rapidly evolving world of medical science, the focus on individualised healthcare has brought to light the distinct requirements and journeys of diverse patient populations. Among these groups are women, whose demand for specialised cardiac rehabilitation is gaining momentum.

Therefore, delving into the critical domain of cardiac rehabilitation crafted specifically for women becomes imperative. This exploration aims to reveal the essential significance of gender-sensitive cardiac rehabilitation, its customised methodologies, and the profound positive influence it wields on women's cardiovascular well-being. Junior Physiotherapist from Institut Jantung Negara, **Nur Faiznabilah Mokhtar** is here to share her insights on women's path to heart rehabilitation.



WHAT ARE THE MAIN GOALS OF CARDIAC REHABILITATION FOR WOMEN WHO HAVE UNDERGONE HEART SURGERY?

Nur Faiznabilah Mokhtar:

"They put their family responsibilities in front of their health" are the words best to describe women who are less likely to get referred to The Cardiac Rehabilitation Program (CRP). For most women who perceived themselves as the primary caregiver in the family, there was a negative impact on their ability if patients didn't maintain a healthy lifestyle upon the post-cardiac events.

So, this CRP is a customised and focused program for patients with cardiovascular disease or patients who have undergone cardiovascular interventions such as coronary angioplasty and coronary artery bypass grafting.

These programs aim to:

- ♥ Limit psychological and physiological stresses associated with cardiovascular disease.
- ♥ Reduce the risk of associated mortality.
- ♥ Improve cardiovascular functions.



The accomplishment of these programs can halt the progression of atherosclerotic disease, increasing the patient's self-confidence and helping patients to maintain healthy habits after the rehabilitation is complete.

WHAT ADVICE OR RECOMMENDATIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR WOMEN WHO ARE ABOUT TO UNDERGO HEART SURGERY AND THE SUBSEQUENT CARDIAC REHABILITATION PROCESS?

Nur Faiznabilah:

After an invasive surgery like heart surgery, generally, patients are hit with the reality that it'll take some time before they feel normal again. However, with a little bit of planning, the good news is that your recovery doesn't seem daunting.

In IJN, pre and post-surgery education are given prior to any invasive procedure.

Pre and post-surgery education covers:

- ♥ The topic regarding the operation or procedure itself.
- ♥ Advice on managing post-operation pain.
- ♥ The type of daily rehabilitation exercises for patients in inpatient.
- ♥ The recommendation of the activities upon discharge and what to expect during post-operation.
- ♥ Patients and Physiotherapists will discuss a few main topics during the rehabilitation process mainly in inpatient.



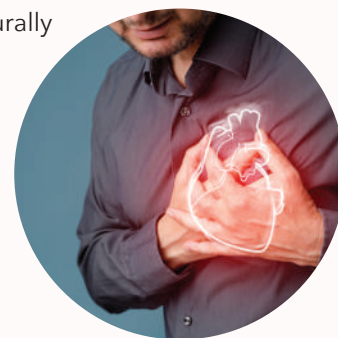
While surgery-recovering procedures could take a toll on most patients, it's a good idea to advise patients to plan for their post-operation recovery activities such as enrollment in the CRP Phase 2 as an outpatient and celebrating their recovery with their loved ones.



ARE THERE ANY HORMONAL OR REPRODUCTIVE FACTORS THAT CAN AFFECT THE RISK AND OUTCOME OF HEART SURGERY IN WOMEN, AND HOW ARE THESE CONSIDERED IN THE TREATMENT PROCESS?

Nur Faiznabilah:

Cardiovascular death due to Myocardial Infarction (MI) and stroke account for the leading number of deaths among men and women. The risk of cardiovascular disease is much lower in women than men until they reach 50 years of age. This is because the Oestrogen hormone that is naturally produced in a woman's body which forms a vital part of regulating the menstrual cycle can offer some protection by controlling cholesterol levels, therefore, reducing the risk of build-up plaque (atherosclerosis). During and after menopause, women's bodies gradually produce less oestrogen with higher androgen than they used to. This reduces the protection for the heart vessels and increases the narrowing of the coronary arteries thus increasing the risk of heart attack among women patients.



The CABG is the most common conventional cardiac revascularization to improve myocardial perfusion. This procedure is invasive and its outcomes and complications may be affected by multiple factors. Having a naturally smaller coronary compared to men can increase the risk of incomplete revascularization and less utilisation of internal mammary arteries upon post-surgery.

Besides, one of the risk predictors for lengthier hospital stays includes osteoporosis and hormonal imbalance, as it can affect sternal bone healing thus increasing the risk of sternal wound infection. Basically, these issues can be dealt with using chest binder with advice from the Physiotherapist. The usage of the chest binder can also help to improve patients' condition during the acute post operative mobilisation phase to reduce pain and boost patients' confidence during the exercises. 💙