

Knoxville Man Gets Serious about Heart Health

George Moore of Knoxville did not realize he was experiencing congestive heart failure. But a series of health events led to this discovery and Moore was prescribed five weeks of cardiac rehab.

Cardiac rehab, short for cardiopulmonary rehabilitation, is a medically supervised exercise program for people who have had surgery or a health event involving the heart or lungs. The program strengthens the heart muscle through planned exercise under the guidance and supervision of a team of nurses and exercise physiologists.

Karen Kirkland, RN, is a certified case manager at Parkwest Cardiopulmonary Rehab located at Covenant Health's Fort Sanders West campus. She says, "Along with the exercise physiologist, we work with our patients during their program and make adjustments so the routine is tailored to their needs."

"You're in Trouble"

Moore, 61, knew he was in trouble in January 2021 after an echocardiogram indicated a measurement called an ejection fraction of only 20 percent. (Normal range is 50-70 percent.) The left ventricle of Moore's heart was pumping blood to his body at barely half the required capacity.

This was a dangerous warning sign he was in congestive heart failure. In addition to beginning cardiac rehab, his medication was adjusted and he received a "life vest," or a wearable defibrillator. He began his exercise sessions five days per week in mid-March. "I was afraid," he says. "I didn't want to do it. I came unwillingly at first."

From Fear to Strength

Moore could barely walk short distances without becoming out



Above left: George Moore began cardiac rehab in March 2021. The staff helped him with physical exercises, but most importantly, they helped him realize that he could achieve his goals. He describes the education classes as "a prescription for better heart care."



Above right: George Moore with Rhonnda Cloinger, MS, CCRP, exercise therapist, left, and Karen Kirkland, RN, certified case manager.

of breath. He also experienced fluid retention, weight gain and poor response to exercise. "I couldn't breathe; just walking was all I could do," Moore recalls. "Every five minutes I would rest and put my hand on the wall or use the walker, and that was just the warm-up."

The caring team at Parkwest Cardiac Rehab helped Moore with a slow and steady exercise regimen. The staff, he says, helped him with encouragement and support during his sessions. His workouts now exceed an hour and he is reaping the benefits of exercise.

Rhonnda Cloinger, MS, is an exercise physiologist and certified cardiac rehab professional (CCRP) who has been at Parkwest Cardiopulmonary Rehab since 1995. She emphasizes that Parkwest is one of the few programs in the nation that offers rehab five days per week. "Most programs have patients come in three days per week," Cloinger says. "So it takes about

three months to complete the program. When patients like George can come to exercise five days per week, they make tremendous progress and are done in five weeks."

Exercise physiologists such as Cloinger work one-on-one with the patient in a motivating, structured environment. "We call it a 'prescription' for each patient," she says. The prescription is an exercise routine tailored to each person. After weeks of diet, exercise and hard work, Moore's echocardiogram revealed he is now out of the danger zone.

Motivation

One thing that motivated Moore was the energy and enthusiasm of others. Another gentleman who was nearing the end of his program told Moore, "I promise you it gets better." Moore reports, "I took that lead, and after three days I got a better attitude. From then on, I said the same

thing to everyone who came in. I encouraged others the best I could."

He attended education classes and individual meetings with a dietitian about nutrition and how to fuel his body to support heart health. "Most of all, I have proven to myself I can walk around the grocery store without getting too tired. I can go on walks and enjoy exercise. I am looking forward to taking a vacation with my family."

The most rewarding part of Cloinger's job is to see patients like Moore succeed. "He was very motivated, and

his overall ability and endurance greatly improved," she says. "Using exercise, we strengthened his heart muscle and improved its ability to pump. His outlook improved and he has continued to make progress—and that is what we like to see."

Moore says, "If this program is recommended to you, do it," he says. "If you have had a heart episode, it will help. If you think you are too weak or it's too hard, I promise you can do it, because I did it."

To learn more about cardiac rehabilitation at Parkwest, visit TreatedWell.com/cardiacrehab.

What conditions may benefit from cardiac rehabilitation?

Conditions or cardiac procedures that might need cardiac rehabilitation may include:

- ♥ Angina pectoris
- ♥ Myocardial infarction (heart attack)
- ♥ Open heart surgery
- ♥ Heart transplantation
- ♥ Balloon angioplasty
- ♥ Stent placement
- ♥ Pacemaker
- ♥ Congenital heart disease
- ♥ Rheumatic heart disease
- ♥ Heart failure



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