Changing Lives

One Breath at a Time

By: Maggie Downs

Don't wait — exercise your right to great health at the Eisenhower Renker Wellness Center, which features dynamic cardiac and pulmonary wellness programs.

Offering exercise, education and support services, the Center provides the perfect balance of everything patients need to jump-start their health and move toward a goal of total wellness.

"We literally see people change their lives here," says Julia Dugan, RN, RCP, Coordinator, Renker Wellness Center. "They come in not able to move 10 feet without getting breathless. Then, before long, they're walking on a treadmill."

Stories of success include people like Joe Crone who had a quadruple bypass in May 2012, and his wife, Jeanne, who is a graduate of the pulmonary wellness program. The couple visits the center at least four times a week for fitness and fun.

"The discipline of this can't be taken lightly," says Joe Crone. "This is life we're talking about here."

Joseph Weaver, Cardiac Rehabilitation Fitness Instructor, demonstrates equipment at the Eisenhower Renker Wellness Center.

Jeanne Crone said she has made many strides toward better health since attending the pulmonary wellness program. "I used to have other people do things for me. Now I do a lot more housework. I take the dog for a walk. I do things for myself," she says. "I've realized if you don't keep moving, you're going to die."

The wellness programs are available for those who have recently experienced a heart attack, stable angina, open heart surgery or suffer from chronic lung disease. A maintenance program is also available for those who no longer need to be monitored while they exercise but want the safety of a workout with licensed, experienced health professionals available on the premises.

"People feel safe here," explains Charles Harrill, RN, Manager, Renker Wellness Center. "It's very scary to have a major health incident. People want to know what to do, how to get a normal life back."

The cardiac and pulmonary wellness programs help patients return to productive, active lifestyles.

According to Harrill, exercise programs at the Renker Wellness Center are often customized for the individual patient. No two routines are ever the same, because no two people have the same needs. New members also receive a health evaluation and a cardiovascular exercise routine. “It can be intimidating to come here, especially for people who aren’t used to working out,” Dugan says. “We do everything we can to make them comfortable.”

The Center features state-of-the-art rehabilitation equipment, including treadmills, stair climbers, bicycles, free weights and more. Need distraction? Plasma TVs will keep you entertained.

In addition to the gym equipment, the Renker Wellness Center also boasts the latest telemetry equipment. Nurses, respiratory therapists and fitness trainers are available to monitor blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen readings before and after working out.

Other services include on-site emergency equipment; a variety of yoga, Pilates and Tai Chi, plus aerobic and stretching classes; and educational lectures about cardiac risk reduction, anticoagulant therapy, and pulmonary disease.

Harrill emphasizes that patients should begin an exercise program as soon as possible after their discharge from the hospital — with a doctor’s approval, of course. “That’s when the habit really sticks — when you realize how much your health depends on it,” he says.

The eight-week pulmonary wellness program consists of three visits per week, two hours each session. Education sessions include discussions about medication, infection control/lung irritants, stress management/panic control, travel, intimacy and lung disease among others.

“Some people come to us on oxygen, unable to do their daily activities. Participating in the wellness program builds strength, endurance and confidence — some patients are even able to reduce their use of oxygen during daily activities,” says Dugan. “That is a huge success story. I couldn’t ask for a better job.”

Harrill echoes the same sentiments. “It becomes a family here,” he says. “We want everyone to succeed.”

About the Renker Wellness Center

Have you been diagnosed with heart or lung disease?
The health care professionals at Renker Wellness Center want patients to regain a normal lifestyle. Their goal is to provide the correct balance of exercise, education and support services to help patients enjoy their best days ever.

The Renker Wellness Center is located on the main campus of Eisenhower Medical Center, 39000 Bob Hope Drive in Rancho Mirage. Hours: 5:30 a.m. to 7 p.m., Monday through Friday. Closed noon to 1 p.m. Call 760-773-2030 for more information.

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