Patients who leave the hospital with a stent may believe that they’re “fixed.” Not so.

Stent Hub Helps Patients Get to the Heart of the Matter

A stent is a small metal scaffold that’s implanted in a formerly blocked coronary artery to keep it open and restore blood flow to the heart muscle. A stent is a life-altering device, but it’s not a cure. After patients get a stent, they must focus on simple but critical steps to keep their hearts healthy and help prevent another heart event.

Stent Hub (www.HealthyHeartsInHarmony.com/stenthub) helps answer the question, “what’s next?” The site features a wealth of resources including educational materials to help patients and caregivers face the physical and emotional challenges of a stent. (Mended Hearts has partnered with Daiichi Sankyo, Inc. and Eli Lilly and Company to offer Stent Hub.)
“Many people think that once they get their stent, they’re cured,” said Dr. JoAnne Foody, medical director of the cardiovascular wellness program at Brigham and Women’s Hospital and a spokesperson for Stent Hub. “Patients need to recognize that taking care of your heart requires ongoing lifelong efforts to stay healthy.”

Mended Hearts visitors play an important role in reinforcing this message, and Stent Hub can be a valuable tool for patients.

**Why Stent Care is Critical**

Foody said the most critical time for a stent patient is the first few weeks after the procedure. “It’s the most vulnerable time from the heart’s perspective,” she explained. “The key is getting patients to develop positive behaviors in the first month. If the commitment happens right away, the patient is more likely to succeed.”

Unfortunately, if a patient doesn’t get on the right track, the stent can close abruptly and cause a heart attack. And if poor health habits continue, other portions of the artery could be affected and require another stent.

Finally, if the disease continues to progress, the stent may no longer work, and the patient could need open-heart surgery.

**The Top Three**

What does a stent patient need to keep in mind? Medication, diet and exercise. Stent Hub’s personalized patient health sheet helps empower patients to track all three.

Foody said it’s critical that patients take their medications properly to prevent the stent from closing.

“We know that adherence to meds is critical,” Foody said, adding that the sheet helps track the dosage, the times and why the medications are needed. “Keeping a list of meds and sharing it with caregivers aids tracking and following the med’s impact, including potential side effects.”

In terms of diet, knowing what to avoid and what to increase is important.

“It’s a useful way to track good and bad choices and see how they can affect heart health,” Foody said. “It gives patients the ability to ensure they stay heart healthy.”

Staying physically fit is also important. Patients who have a stent must increase their exercise level (after they check with their healthcare provider) to “burn calories and keep their heart strong,” Foody said. Exercise can also keep stents from clotting.

**How Caregivers Play a Role**

November was National Caregivers Month, but caregivers’ essential role is worth remembering any time of the year. Stent Hub has resources for caregivers to help them help their loved ones with tasks like staying on top of diet, increasing exercise, quitting smoking and taking meds.

“We know that patients who engage caregivers are less likely to have another event, but the caregiver role can be difficult,” Foody said, adding that both may be struggling with a new dynamic. And patients “may have been eating a certain way for the past 50 years.”

She added: “Clearly caregiving is a role most people aren’t trained for, yet it’s critical for the success of a patient with a stent.”

The caregiver’s role can’t be underestimated. “It takes everyone thinking about the stent patient’s heart health,” she said. With active participation, “we have the opportunity to prevent further heart events from taking place.”

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1. A stent (a wire mesh tube) is mounted onto a catheter and guided through the artery to the blockage.
2. The stent is opened and locks into place inside the artery.
3. The catheter is removed. The stent remains in place, holding the artery open.
Connecting in the Community:

OUR GRASSROOTS ARE GREAT

Great grassroots efforts turn good ideas into powerful, even life-changing actions. Such efforts start with a few committed people and a lot of time, labor and love. Their impact is often immeasurable.

Mended Hearts’ exceptional grassroots efforts are one of our distinguishing attributes. We’d like to showcase just a few examples of how Mended Hearts makes a difference in communities, but efforts like this are going on across the country. This list is by no means comprehensive. If you have stories you’d like to share, we’d love to hear from you!
Chapter 23, Eastern North Carolina

Chapter 23’s members didn’t just enjoy a leisurely summer — they were busy expanding Mended Hearts’ influence across the entire state of North Carolina. The chapter was asked to contribute to North Carolina’s five-year policy plan for cardiovascular disease and stroke prevention. A task force will develop a plan for policy and possibly legislative changes to develop heart-healthy communities across the state.

“We were invited to provide goals and strategies that address the transition from hospital to positive lifestyle,” said President Laura Levin, who heads Chapter 23; her husband Pete is chapter secretary. “The group includes doctors, cardiologists, internists, nurses, county health departments, hospitals, cardiac rehab groups, heart agencies, state government departments and now, Mended Hearts.”

Chapter members are excited to be on the cutting edge of a comprehensive, healthy plan to effect systemic change in North Carolina. “I can see the opportunity for great growth in members and other chapters,” Laura added.

Over the summer, several chapter members also introduced guest speakers to meetings and started a new volunteer program.

“Our chapter has a close association with our local hospital, University Health Systems of Eastern North Carolina, and the Brody School of Medicine of East Carolina University, including the joint venture of our Heart Institute,” Laura said.

Several members, including the previous chapter president, began volunteering in the cardiology clinic. Now patients are getting help finding doctors and offices as well as a personal guide with similar cardiovascular experiences.
Breathing New Life into Communities

Chapter 127, Cookeville, Tenn., and Chapter 94, Washington, D.C.

Chapter 127 (with Cookeville Regional Medical Center) spreads heart-healthy messages by participating in about a dozen health fairs annually that reach between 100 to 3,000 attendees.

And every high school in all 10 counties in the upper Cumberland area of middle Tennessee now has an automated external defibrillator (AED), thanks to Chapter 127. The chapter also purchased 320 mannequins for use at the schools so that every high school student can be trained to perform CPR and learn how to use an AED, according to Chapter President Pharoah Smithers.

In addition, the chapter has given 60 AEDs to area senior centers and churches.

Chapter 94, the National Capital Area Chapter, in Washington, D.C., launched a project to place AEDs in each of the area’s 26 public library branches. The chapter partnered with friends-of-the-libraries organizations and the Cheney Cardiovascular Institute at George Washington University to get it done.

“AEDs are prevalent in downtown office buildings, in government office buildings and in areas of the city near the monuments and museums that are visited by millions of tourists,” said President Neal Gregory, who also heads the Friends of Southeast Library. “Mended Hearts decided to join the Cheney Center in its goal of reaching out to the city’s underserved residential neighborhoods, suggesting the 26 branches of the D.C. Public Library, which serves 2.3 million patrons each year, as logical places for AEDs.”

Chapter 94 received $10,000 from the estate of longtime member Gladys Myers to help fund the project. Neal asked the Federation of Friends of the D.C. Public Library to endorse the effort and match the donation.

“With this partnership of Mended Hearts, George Washington University and the Federation of Friends, AEDs were placed in prominent places near the circulation desks at each of the branch libraries,” Neal said. “The Cheney Center also provided CPR training for the D.C. public library staff.”

The chapter visits at five area hospitals, including suburban Maryland: Washington Hospital Center, Suburban Hospital, the George Washington University Hospital, Washington Adventist Hospital and Shady Grove Adventist Hospital.
Improving Patient Care, Walking for a Cause

Chapter 161, Hollywood, Fla., and Chapter 214, Sioux Falls, S.D.

Patient care is a big focus for Chapter 161. “Our chapter has been honored to assist in making recommendations to enhance patient improvement in all areas of Memorial Regional Hospital by serving on nine committees,” said President Eugene Casale. The chapter’s area of service includes three counties: Dade, Broward and Palm Beach.

“What’s most important is the exposure that Mended Hearts gets in dealing with hospital policy and improving patient care,” Eugene said. “Respect when serving on a committee is a feeling of giving back to the community and making our goal more important to heart patients and patients in general. As visitors and committee members, we can relate to patient needs and family questions.”

He added: “Chapters that serve together with the hospital they serve will always be successful in being a true team in patient improvement.”

Chapter 161 has also helped run booths for health fairs at 19 locations. “Our duties were to distribute promotional and heart-related materials,” Eugene said. “Our chapter also participated in two Heart Walks sponsored by the American Heart Association.”

Chapter 214 members Sonja Carlberg and Jim Berg were featured in public service announcements for a walk event that aired on a local TV channel in Sioux Falls, S.D.

“For the same event, I was on a local channel’s ‘Medical Minute’ along with our hospital’s CEO, and was able to mention my connection with Mended Hearts,” said President Cathy Byington. “And two years ago our group was thrilled to present an AED to a local church. This allowed us to tell the story of Mended Hearts to five groups of parishioners and raise awareness of our mission.”

The chapter’s heart hospital also hosted “Mega Heart,” a large, inflatable, anatomically correct heart. Mended Hearts members served as hosts and tour guides as local students learned about hands-only CPR, nutrition, the benefits of exercise, the dangers of smoking, stent procedures and heart tours.

“We helped plan the event and had opportunities to speak with parent drivers who accompanied the students on our mission as volunteers and survivors,” Cathy said.

She also presented a similar heart experience to her grandson’s school. “We had the same on-site experience, and then as a volunteer and survivor I spoke to the classes. They shared their own family experiences and concerns — and a cardiac surgery nurse brought pig hearts to the classes and gave a hands-on anatomy class to the students, which they loved!” ❤️