

EXERCISING

WITH

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION



Regular exercise can be beneficial for individuals with atrial fibrillation because of its positive effect on many of the contributing factors to heart disease, including high blood pressure and cholesterol, diabetes and obesity. The key to maximizing the benefits of exercise is to follow a well-designed program that you can stick to over the long-term.

Getting Started

- Talk with your cardiologist about integrating regular exercise into your treatment plan. If you are able, it can be very helpful to join a local hospital-based cardiac rehabilitation program.
- Take all medications as recommended by your physician.
- The goals of your program should be to improve your fitness and ability to perform activities of daily living, increase muscle strength and endurance, improve range of motion, and reduce your risk of injury.
- Choose activities that involve large muscles groups and can be done continuously. If your fitness level is low, start with shorter sessions (10 to 15 minutes) and gradually build up to 30 to 45 minutes, three or more days per week.
- Perform low-resistance, high-repetition strength-training exercises three days per week and whole-body range of motion exercises three to five days per week.
- Take frequent breaks during activity if needed. Your workouts should be comfortable and not strained.

Exercise Cautions

- If you also have ischemic heart disease, chronic heart failure or valvular heart disease, the exercise programming considerations for these conditions should take precedence over those for atrial fibrillation.
- Atrial fibrillation can be intermittent, which means your heart rhythm may be normal one day and irregular the next. It is a good idea to adjust how hard and how long you exercise based on how you feel and be aware that some days you may feel more fatigued and have a lower tolerance for exercise.
- Stop exercising immediately and contact your physician if you experience chest pain, labored breathing or extreme fatigue.

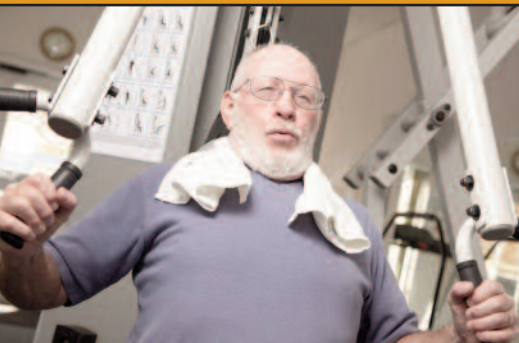
Your exercise program should be designed to maximize the benefits with the fewest risks of aggravating your health or physical condition. Consider contacting a certified health and fitness professional* who can work with you and your health care provider to establish realistic goals and design a safe and effective program that addresses your specific needs.

*If your health care provider has not cleared you for independent physical activity and would like you to be monitored in a hospital setting or a medical fitness facility, you should exercise only under the supervision of a certified professional. The American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) has two groups of certified fitness professionals that could meet your needs. The ACSM Certified Clinical Exercise Specialist (CES) is certified to support those with heart disease, diabetes and lung disease. The ACSM Registered Clinical Exercise Physiologist (RCEP) is qualified to support patients with a wide range of health challenges. You may locate all ACSM-certified fitness professionals by using the ProFinder at www.acsm.org.

For more information, visit www.exerciseismedicine.org or e-mail eim@acsm.org.

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