Reduce Stress When Living With Atrial Fibrillation

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Rest Tips for a Calm and Healthy Life

Treatment for AFib is always personalized, often combining medication and lifestyle changes, but all patients will benefit from better rest and relaxation cycle. Research shows that psychological stress is one of the most common triggers of AFib, so relaxation should become a major priority for your physical, spiritual and emotional well-being. The sooner you learn which relaxation methods are the safest and most effective, the sooner you can restore your body's balance and function. Now let's take a look at atrial fibrillation and stress.

The Importance of Reducing Stress with Atrial Fibrillation

In a recent study of 100 patients with intermittent AFib, 54% reported that the majority of their attacks were brought on by stress. While it can start as a small annoyance, atrial fibrillation and stress can join together to breed larger problems, like a cycle of depression and general anxiety that can interfere with your disease management: anxiety can trigger an AFib episode, and dealing with AFib (and the thought of it occurring again) will increase the level and frequency of anxiety. To avoid this hazardous cycle, learn to make room for rest, relaxation and rejuvenation with a thoughtful approach and firm commitment.

Choosing Healthy Relaxation Techniques

Experts suggest that you not only make time for relaxation and recovery but schedule it into your week. Even if you may not feel like following your plan some days, stick with it: forming a habit around pleasant, calming activities will help you improve your control over your anxiety and maintain good heart health.

There are a few straightforward ways to beat stress and relax your body while keeping your AFib under control:

- **Practice guided meditation and progressive relaxation.** There's no doubt that meditation can improve your body's physical response. Try visualizing a calm atmosphere and use deep breathing to develop a soothing rhythm. Or, contract and relax each muscle group one at a time to bring your body to a state of deep relaxation.
- **Get a good sleep**. Sleep quality plays a big role in AFib episodes, stress relief, and emotional balance. Make sure you have a soothing sleep environment, avoid stimulating activities right before bed, and stick to a strict sleep schedule.
- **Take an active role in your treatment**. Get a better grasp on AFib by reading up on the symptoms and treatments, and talk to your doctor regularly about your own case. The better you understand what your body is going through – and what you can do about it – the more likely you'll be able to overcome anxious episodes.

On the other hand, some activities that others find relaxing may not be healthy for you, so be careful to avoid a few common habits:

- **Be wary of herbal supplements**. Although they may seem benign, some herbs and vitamins have been known to interfere with the efficacy and metabolism of the common anticoagulant warfarin. If you're taking warfarin, be sure to pass any herbal teas or relaxing tinctures by your doctor before you use them.
- **Traditional relaxants can be hazardous**. You may feel like kicking back with a glass of wine at the end of the day, but while a bit of alcohol can be perfectly fine for some, it is known to trigger AFib. The same goes for caffeinated comfort foods, like chocolate.

If anxiety is becoming a big problem in your life, you may want to consider specific anxiety medication, counseling, or both. It's important to remember that emotional health is closely tied to physical health, and any step to improve your psychological well-being is also a heart-healthy move.