Natural Options to Reverse and Manage Atrial Fibrillation

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How to Reverse Atrial Fibrillation Naturally

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a heart condition affecting the transmission of signals through the heart's electrical system. AF creates a chaotic and often rapid heartbeat accompanied by shortness of breath, dizziness, fatigue, and chest discomfort. In this article, you will learn about AF symptoms and how reverse atrial fibrillation naturally.

This type of heart condition is now a worldwide epidemic. According to an article from the Intermountain Healthcare in May 2013, 25% of adults in the U.S. will experience an AF episode at some point in their life.

The primary concern with AF is the condition increases a person's risk for stroke, heart failure, and it can double the risk of Alzheimer's disease, dementia, and early death.

Receiving a diagnosis of AF is not as bleak as it sounds. Many people can successfully manage the condition so that symptoms are not life-threatening.

Managing and Possibly Reversing AF

If you have AF, there is a solid chance you can manage it successfully, depending on your type. Your healthcare team's choices for treating the disease are medications, electrical cardioversion and surgical procedures.

Medications

If your physician determines medications are the best choice for you, there are several options to choose from:

- **Anticoagulants.** These reduce the blood's ability to clot and decrease your risk of stroke. Your physician has a scoring system to use that will help determine if anticoagulants are appropriate for you.
- **Antiarrhythmics.** This helps to maintain a normal rhythm. For some people, this is a temporary solution because of the limited long-term effect.
- **Beta-blockers.** These are generally the first choice to help control heart rate.
- **Calcium channel blockers.** These are also used to help control heart rate but are sometimes not as effective as beta-blockers.
- **Digitalis.** This helps beta-blockers and calcium channel blockers with regulating heart rate.
- **Antiplatelets.** These help decrease the risk of blood clot formation by reducing the stickiness of platelets in the bloodstream. Aspirin is the best-known antiplatelet medication.

Electrical Cardioversion

As the name implies, this procedure uses low levels of electricity to shock the heart back into a normal rhythm.

A licensed healthcare professional places external cardiac defibrillator pads or paddles on two specific areas of

the upper body and delivers the shock while the person is under sedation.

Studies show that this procedure is one of the most effective ways for restoring normal heart rhythm. The success rate does decrease substantially for people who have had AF longer than five years.

Surgical Procedures

If your AF does not return to and stay in a regular rhythm after attempting management with medication or electrical cardioversion, your physician's next option is a surgical procedure. The two current methods to choose from are catheter ablation or a Maze procedure.

Catheter ablation is minimally invasive and uses a catheter inserted into the heart muscle to send small bursts of energy to the areas of heart tissue producing irregular electrical signals. These bursts of power cause heart tissue to die, stopping it from making erratic electrical signals.

Radiofrequency ablation uses heat in a point-by-point pattern to destroy the disruptive heart tissue. Cryoablation uses cold energy via a balloon that freezes the tissue. Both types of catheter ablation require hospitalization and have high success rates.

A Maze procedure is an option for people who need open-heart surgery for other reasons such as heart valve replacement or repair or coronary artery bypass grafting. A cardiac surgeon creates lines of scar tissue in the heart muscle that block the abnormal signals causing AF.

According to an article on the Cleveland Clinic website, Maze procedures carry the highest success rate of any surgical procedure used for correcting AF.

Natural Ways to Manage AF

Using lifestyle changes to take care of your body is one of the most important steps you can take to help manage and possibly reverse AF by reducing your frequency of episodes. Some of the most significant changes you can make are:

- Follow a regular exercise program that includes aerobic exercise and strength training weekly. Set a starting goal for at least 30 minutes per session, five days a week.
- Choose a heart-healthy diet that includes lots of raw fruits and vegetables and reduce or eliminate saturated fats and processed foods. Some physicians are strong advocates of following a fish and plant-based diet.
- Decrease consumption of foods and beverages that contain caffeine, as this can be an AF trigger.
- Reduce or avoid alcohol intake. For some people, the more they drink, the higher their risk of an AF episode.
- Stop smoking or using smokeless tobacco. Tobacco is a contributing factor to many different types of heart disease.
- Try to establish a sleep schedule that helps you get to bed on time as often as possible and get seven to eight hours of quality sleep each night. Irregular sleep patterns and feeling overtired are AF triggers for some people.
- Learn and apply effective stress management techniques for when the events of life push you to your limit. Meditation, yoga, prayer, reading, going for a walk, and spending time with people you enjoy being around are all effective coping strategies you can use during these times.
- Develop a strategy for reaching and maintaining a healthy weight. Being overweight increases the risk for AF episodes for many people and can put you at higher risk for sleep apnea, an independent AF risk factor.
- Please take your medications as prescribed and report any side effects to your physician when they occur.

There is no universal method to manage and/or reversed AF that works for everyone. Many people find that a combination of medication, a surgical procedure if needed and lifestyle management works the best for them.

If you are unsure how best to manage your type of AF, talk with your physician and other healthcare team members to determine what steps to take. Asking questions about what options are suitable for you is often an excellent place to start.