You Can Continue Working With Atrial Fibrillation

by YVONNE BANKS

Supporting Yourself and Your Family When You Have AFib

The doctor has just told you that you have atrial fibrillation. You will need to watch your activity so that you do not over exert yourself. This may be a quandary for you if you are the main breadwinner for your family. Depending on the type of work you do, it will influence your decision on whether you stay at your job or if your employer will make accommodations for you without cutting your salary.

There are some things you may need to approach the boss about and see what will result from it. Take in information pamphlets to help your supervisor understand your condition and hopefully, your workload can be lightened. Making adjustments may be all that needs to be done to keep you on as a productive worker.

Working with Afib

Here are some guidelines and suggestions as to what to consider when working with atrial fibrillation:

- **Stress reduction:** Stress can trigger AFib symptoms. If your job is high-stress, you will need to take measures to reduce it or you will not be able to work at your position without having an episode. See if you can take breaks when needed to de-stress. Ask the supervisor about reducing the physical workload or changing jobs. You may need to resort to a desk job to avoid hard labor. When working on the job, if you start having symptoms like you are going to pass out, sit down and get help.

- **Avoid swing shifts:** If you have the option of working straight shifts, do so. Get out of doing swing shifts since this can add stress to the body. Night shift is not much better since you get used to sleeping during the day only to readjust your sleeping pattern for your days off.
- **Take blood thinning medication with caution.** If you are taking blood-thinning medication, you need to talk to your physician about any safety concerns if you become injured on the job. You may have severe bleeding that won't stop if you get injured on the job. Blood thinners may pose a problem with your type of occupation; however, you may ask about a heart plug device and forego taking this kind of medication.
- **Give yourself time to get to work.** Get ready and leave early to get to work so that you do not place undue stress on yourself when navigating roads and hitting slow traffic. Put on some soothing music when stuck in traffic. Use air conditioning or heat depending on the climate and time of year. Do not allow the car to get too hot or too cold in the inner environment. If you have an Afib episode and it's mild, it is safe to keep driving. Significant symptoms that come on will warrant pulling over and calling for help.