The Effects of Smoking With Atrial Fibrillation

by BRENDA VANTA

Atrial Fibrillation and Smoking

You know that smoking is bad for everybody. If you suffer from Afib, your doctor would've told you that if you smoke, you should stop right away. Nicotine increases the blood pressure, has a negative impact on your heart muscles, increases the heart rate and therefore can trigger an Afib attack. Would you like to know more about the effects of smoking on Afib sufferers?

Research

A large study featured in 2011 in “Medical News Today” was conducted over the course of 13 years with over 15,000 participants between 45 and 64 years of age. The researchers gathered information about the numbers of cigarettes smoked daily, whether the subjects smoked in the past, they were current smokers or never smoked, and the age when they started and/or stopped smoking.

The results: the risk of Afib was 1.32 times higher in former smokers and twice as high in current smokers compared with those who had never smoked. Furthermore, former heavy smokers had an almost 90% increased risk of developing Afib, and those who were currently smoking had an even higher risk (131%) compared with those who never smoked.

The good news: those who quit smoking had a 12% decrease in their chances of developing Afib.

How About Smoking Marijuana?

You shouldn’t smoke marijuana either. Doctors reveal there are an increasing number of reports showing that marijuana has a significant impact on the cardio-vascular system and there is a connection between smoking marijuana and the development of Afib. Marijuana raises the blood pressure, drops the oxygen capacity and therefore makes the heart work harder than normal. Other symptoms such as palpitations, dizziness, fainting and falls have also been reported. Afib also increases the risk of stroke. Marijuana smokers were 2.3 times more likely to have a stroke in their middle-age than those who hadn't smoked pot.

Tips to Live a Healthy Life and Never Smoke Again

Whether you are in the process of quitting smoking, or you experience occasional cravings, consider the following tips:

1. **Nicotine cravings don’t last forever.** The worst part is in the first few minutes, and the cravings typically go away in 20 minutes. Consider turning to an activity to distract yourself and resist those minutes of cravings
2. **Think '4 Ds': drink water, deep breathing, delay, or do something.** Drinking a glass of water works well, as it has a calming, relaxing effect. Deep breaths can also help, if you take about 10 of them at the

time, and you practice this technique outdoors (breathing fresh air). Exercising more can help prevent weight gain and increases the feel good chemicals in the brain (that can fight the cravings)

3. **Keep yourself busy.** Call a friend, or join an online forum and chat with someone who is also dealing with nicotine cravings. Play a game, watch a movie, listen to some music, take a shower, or brush your teeth. Chewing gum (especially cinnamon flavored) can also help. If you choose to have a snack, make sure it is a low-calorie, healthy option - for example celery sticks, carrots, fresh fruit or a few nuts.