Everything You Need to Know About AFib and Sex

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Enjoy Sex Without Complications

Sex is a fairly common concern among AFib patients, since it's seemingly pretty strenuous for the heart. There's no doubt that, among all its pleasurable virtues, sex kicks up the heart rate and flushes your body with energy, but is that good or bad for your cardiovascular health?

Living with a heart condition means paying closer attention to everyday triggers and potential dangers, but it's important to separate facts from myths before you include or exclude something from your life. Find out why, and how, you should balance good AFib management with a healthy sex life.

Psychological Obstacles to Intimacy

AFib can be scary, and it's natural to worry about any activity that could bring about an episode. Before you know it, this worry can overcome your natural and healthy sexual desires, and those of your partner. However, doctors insist that any fear of devastating consequences is misplaced, and will only serve to block your emotional outlets and interfere with your relationship.

It's true that sex stresses your heart, but that can be very good for the body. Although it will cause your blood pressure to rise and your heart rate to speed up, sex is exercise, and exercise ultimately strengthens the heart muscle. Help put your mind at ease by focusing on the positives that exercise (and sex) will bring:

- Positive outlook and better mood
- Healthy weight
- Better sleep
- Stronger self confidence

In fact, experts warn that a lack of sexual activity can feed anxiety and depression, which is particularly worrying if changes or limitations posed by your AFib have already affected your emotional health. Also, if anxiety begins to interfere with your daily routine, you may be less inclined to stay on track with your physical fitness, and the cycle continues.

If you can't seem to convince yourself that everything will be alright, talk to your doctor. Many patients find that simply hearing a medical professional confirm that they can have sex without it interfering with their AFib is enough to calm and reassure their minds. If you're worried about your partner's AFib, the same applies – talk to a doctor about the statistics and possibilities of problems to get a clearer picture.

Next page: physical precautions to take for safety and comfort.

Physical Precautions for Safety and Comfort

Although the risk of a heart emergency is incredibly small – you have less than a 1% chance of suffering fatal heart failure during or after intercourse – there are a few things that will keep those chances low, and help you enjoy your intimate moments to the fullest:

- **Stay active**. Physical activity makes physical activity easier. If you get regular exercise (that is, around 30 minutes a day, most days of the week), the better your heart will be able to deal with sudden bursts of strenuous exercise – namely, sex. Doctors suggest that if you can climb two sets of stairs without problems, your heart should be fine during sex. In other words, stay fit, and you'll be able to enjoy all aspects of a healthy lifestyle with fewer risks.
- **Monitor symptoms**. As long as you aren't having symptoms, sex with AFib should pose no problem, but there could be an issue if you notice irregularities with your heart before you begin. It can be tempting to "not ruin the moment," but if you feel that something isn't quite right – palpitations, chest pain, dizziness, anxiety – it may be a better idea to stop, relax and assess. Some people (older patients, less fit people, or those with cardiovascular disease), may sustain a higher heart rate for a longer time trying to reach climax, and that could cause trouble. Speak to your doctor if you have any of these complicating factors, so you know what to look for and when to be concerned.
- **Keep a record**. If you're worried that sex may trigger your AFib, keep a journal to record how you feel during exercise and afterwards. Track your symptoms, how long they last, and how severe they are; if you see a pattern emerge, you and your doctor may be able to pinpoint problematic activities. Diaries are excellent tools to monitor triggers and work through potentially dangerous situations.
- **Revisit medication dosage**. After psychological worry, the next biggest issue with AFib and sex is physical dysfunction. Beta blockers are commonly prescribed to treat AFib, but they can also interfere with blood pressure, and in turn, some men may experience erectile dysfunction. Luckily, a lower dose will often resolve the problem, and if it doesn't, a switch in medication or some further investigation into underlying disorders can lead you to a better medication regimen that supports a healthy sex life.

Speak up for Better Quality of Life

Sex can be a tough subject to bring up, but it's an important part of a loving, romantic relationship. Therefore, you should treat is as you would treat the other aspects that contribute to your happy, fulfilling lifestyle.

There's no reason to be intimidated or embarrassed by your doctor when it comes to discussing questions or concerns about sex. They've heard it all and seen it all, and you probably can't say anything to shock them, so don't fret about getting to the heart of the matter. The more quickly and thoroughly you can resolve your anxieties, the better your emotional and physical quality of life can become.