The Importance of Maintaining a Healthy Weight With AFib

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How and Why to Lose Weight With AFib

Maintaining or reaching a healthy weight is very important if you have atrial fibrillation, even if your heart rhythm is well controlled. If you want to live well despite atrial fibrillation, follow a healthy diet and exercise program.

Consult with your cardiologist or a nutrition expert for individualized advice on AFib and losing weight. Always seek the advice of your cardiologist before beginning an exercise program.

Why Weight Management Is Important When You Have Atrial Fibrillation

Here are some reasons why maintaining a healthy weight is particularly important if you suffer from atrial fibrillation:

You Can Avoid Complications

It is important you do everything possible to keep your cardiovascular system healthy so you don't develop complications. Complications may be painful, require hospitalization, or be life-threatening.

You and your loved ones do not need to experience the stress and financial burdens illness causes. The last place you want to be is in a hospital bed where you may be exposed to serious infectious diseases that may not be curable.

Prevent High Blood Pressure

High blood pressure is a killer. It can result in chest pain, stroke, heart attack and death. When your blood pressure is elevated, damage is occurring to the capillaries within your organs. Your brain, eyes and kidneys are particularly susceptible to blood vessel damage.

Avoid or Limit Complications Due to Diabetes

Many individuals who have atrial fibrillation also suffer from diabetes. Maintaining a healthy weight can help you to keep blood glucose levels under control. Keeping blood sugar levels under control will help you live a longer, healthier life.

Since you have atrial fibrillation, you already are at risk for potentiality fatal blood clot development. When blood glucose levels are elevated, blood is “stickier” and the risk of clot formation rises. Blood clots can cause heart attacks, stroke, pulmonary emboli, damage to organs, tissue injury and death.

Maintain a healthy weight, keep your blood sugar under control, and avoid complications of both diabetes and

atrial fibrillation.

How to Reach or Maintain a Healthy Weight

Reaching and maintaining a healthy weight involves diet, exercise and commitment. It is a lifelong process. It's never too late to begin eating better and getting more exercise.

Eat a Heathy, Fresh Diet

Eating a diet composed primarily of fresh, simple foods not only tastes great and helps you to maintain a healthy weight; it enhances the health of your heart and blood vessels.

- Minimize your intake of sugar, fat and salt.
- Hot tasting herbs and spices, such as pepper and ginger, dilate blood vessels and improve circulation while helping to the body maintain a healthy blood pressure. Garlic, onions and shallots reduce levels of unhealthy cholesterol.

Next page: how exercise and proper hydration can help you manage your AFib.

How to Reach or Maintain a Healthy Weight

- Obtain most of your protein from plants. Plant-based proteins are inexpensive, filling, and aid regular bowel function. Compounds in dried peas, beans and lentils help to reduce unhealthy cholesterol levels.
- Include small amounts of nuts and seeds in your diet. Read package labels as nuts and seeds, while nutrient dense, are relatively high in calories.
- Enjoy fish at least couple of times per week. Some fish are very low in calories and high in protein. Others are higher in calories, but they contain heart healthy fatty acids which reduce inflammation, a common factor that creates multiple illness. Salmon, mackerel, herring and sardines contain omega-rich, protective fatty acids.
- Weighing and measuring foods will help you reach and maintain a healthy weight more efficiently. Once you get good at weighing and measuring, you will be prepared to estimate portion sizes more accurately even when you eat out
- Fill up on antioxidant heart-healthy fruits and vegetables in a wide array of colors.
- Include plenty of fresh raw produce in your diet daily.

Hydration and What You Drink Directly Impact Weight Loss

Make sure you consume lots of fluids every day. They will help fill you up, prevent AFib dehydration, and aid detoxification of your tissues.

Plan to consume an amount of fluid each day, measured in ounces, which is equivalent to half of your weight in pounds. For example, if you weigh 200 pounds, drink at least 100 ounces of fluid daily. Most of that liquid should be water.

Drink alcoholic beverages wisely. If your cardiologist says it is OK for you to drink alcoholic beverages, drink intelligently. A four-ounce glass of red wine contains resveratrol, a compound that supports cardiovascular health. White wine, beer and hard spirits do not offer the same cardiovascular benefits that red wine offers.

Get Exercise Every Day

Avoid drinking more than one glass of wine a few times per week as it can cause your blood pressure to rise. Your kidneys and liver may be damaged from overuse of alcohol.In addition to helping you look good and feel better, regular exercise reduces stress and inhibits inflammation. Your body, mind and spirit will benefit.

Exercise can help you maintain a healthy blood pressure. It speeds up weight loss by increasing your metabolic rate. Your body will continue to burn calories at a faster rate for hours after you stop exercising.

Weight Management Is Worth the Effort

Weight management is important for living well and living long. Even a small reduction in weight can lead to striking health benefits. Look at weight loss as just as important, or perhaps more so, than taking your medicine every day.

You would not stop taking your medicine because you know that would be harmful. Eating a healthy diet and exercising every day are just as important to living well despite atrial fibrillation. Weight management is worth pursuing because your life is worth living well!