

What To do If Someone You Love Has AFib

Atrial fibrillation affects over 33 million people worldwide and is the most common sustained cardiac arrhythmia. It increases the risk of stroke, heart failure and hospitalization. Treatment focuses on reducing the risk of stroke and treating the arrhythmia and may include lifestyle modifications, medications and procedures. **Read on to understand what you can do to help support your loved one who has been diagnosed with AFib.**

Medication Compliance Support

Sometimes it can be challenging to remember to take medications. Setting a medication reminder alarm, using a pill box, or making calendar reminders may help the patient remember to take medications at the appointed time.

If your loved one has been prescribed an anticoagulant, a medication to thin the blood to help prevent stroke, it is imperative that the medication is taken exactly as prescribed. One common anticoagulant is warfarin (Coumadin). Warfarin requires that the blood be tested to make sure that the level of blood thinning is right. It's effectiveness can be affected but foods that are high in Vitamin K, alcohol and certain medications. A patient on warfarin might be referred to an anticoagulation clinic to help monitor and adjusted the warfarin dose as necessary.

CALCULATE YOUR RISK

Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle

Obesity, high blood pressure, excessive alcohol intake and sleep apnea can all contribute to the development or progression of AFib. Weight loss and maintaining an ideal body weight is an important component of treating obesity, high blood pressure and sleep apnea and therefore is an important component of the treatment of atrial fibrillation. Eating a diet that is high in vegetables, fruits, lean protein, legumes and whole grains. Engaging in frequent, moderate intensity cardiovascular exercise and strength training in combination with a healthy diet can help promote weight loss. Alcohol has a lot of calories which can inhibit weight loss. In addition, it is irritating to the heart and can promote atrial fibrillation. Abstaining from alcohol or limiting alcohol intake to 1 drink/day for women and 2 drinks/day for men is recommended. If sleep apnea is present and CPAP has been recommended, it is important it is used every night.

Stress Management

Managing an illness can be hard for the whole family. Often times, patients with AFib do not feel good and may not be able to do their normal activities when they are in atrial fibrillation. This may cause additional burden to be placed on the caregiver. There may be financial strain due to the cost of treating atrial fibrillation. As a caregiver, it is important to take care of yourself. Be sure to give yourself breaks when you are able. If friends or family offer help, take it. Don't be afraid to ask for help from your support network.

It can feel scary or overwhelming when a loved one get diagnosed with AFib. It is important to remember that while there is not currently a cure for atrial fibrillation, there are excellent treatment options and most people with AFib continue to live rich and full lives.

Visit The Scoop next week when we'll discuss [whole body healthcare plans for AFib patients](#).

