

Natural Ways to Help Afib

DISCLAIMER

The information provided herein is intended for a general knowledge only and is not a substitute for medical advice or a treatment for specific medical conditions. You assume full responsibility for how you choose to use this information. Always consult with your doctor or other professional healthcare provider for a medical advice.

1. [Atrial Fibrillation \(+ 6 Natural Ways to Help Treat 'A-Fib' Symptoms\)](#) – Dr. Josh Axe
2. [Top Natural Remedies for Coronary Heart Disease](#) – Dr. Josh Axe
3. [SCAD: Yes, Young Women Can Suffer a Heart Attack](#) – Dr. Josh Axe
4. [Angina + 8 Natural Ways to Help Relieve Mild Chest Pain](#) – Dr. Josh Axe
5. [Arrhythmias](#) by Life Extension
6. [These 5 Heart Disease Tests Could Save Your Life \(And Your Doctor Probably Isn't Ordering Them\)](#)
7. [Cardiomyopathy Reversible with CoQ10 and Selenium](#)
8. [Natural Home Remedies For Heart Palpitations](#)
9. [Natural Remedies and Alternate Therapies for Atrial Fibrillation](#)
10. [Total Body Reset for AFib](#) – use of magnesium to restore normal heartbeat and [this link](#)
11. [86 Abstracts with Cardiac Arrhythmias Research](#) – Green Med Info (below are some of the 86)
 - a. [Omega-3, vitamins C and E together are effective in the prevention of postoperative atrial fibrillation](#)
 - b. [An increased concentration of omega-3 fatty acids in serum \(especially DHA\), a marker of fish or fish oil consumption, may protect against atrial fibrillation in men.](#)
 - c. [Beans Vs. Exercise for Heart Health](#)
 - d. [Consumption of tuna or other broiled or baked fish, but not fried fish or fish sandwiches, is associated with lower incidence of atrial fibrillation.](#)
 - e. [Magnesium supplementation may reduce the incidence of postoperative arrhythmias in pediatric patients undergoing cardiopulmonary bypass.](#)
 - f. [Vitamin C is effective as prophylaxis for the prevention of postoperative atrial fibrillation.](#)
 - g. [A low plasma vitamin D concentration was strongly associated with atrial fibrillation in patients with chronic heart failure.](#)
 - h. [Acupuncture has therapeutic value in the treatment of atrial fibrillation and post-herpetic neuralgia.](#)
 - i. [80 percent of patients who undergo cardioversion for persistent atrial fibrillation or atrial flutter after AF ablation have recurrence.](#)
 - j. [Exercise training has therapeutic value in patients with chronic atrial fibrillation.](#)
 - k. [L-carnitine has significant antiarrhythmia activity.](#)
 - l. [Magnesium administration prevents atrial fibrillation after coronary artery bypass graft surgery.](#)
 - m. [Magnesium is safe and effective for acute atrial fibrillation.](#)
 - n. [Magnesium is superior to Verapamil in treating supraventricular arrhythmias.](#)

- o. [Nut consumption may play a role in reducing the risk of atrial fibrillation and possibly heart failure.](#)
- p. [Repeated sauna treatment improves ventricular arrhythmias in patients with chronic heart failure.](#)
- q. [Resveratrol reduces sympathetic neural remodeling \(and associated ventricular arrhythmias\) in rats following myocardial infarction.](#)
- r. [Green tea may be benefit to the therapy of atrial fibrillation.](#)

Summary of key points

Short summary:

To naturally treat AF, make sure to get your yearly checkups; eat an anti-inflammatory diet (and not too much at one time; lower stress; exercise; reduce intake of chemicals, toxins and air pollution; and use an over-the-counter anti-inflammatory.

- Sauna, Resveratrol, Green Tea, Omega-3 fish oil, Curcumin and garlic supplements, [Coenzyme Q10](#), [Carotenoids](#), Selenium, Vitamins C, D and E, 1,000 milligrams of L-carnitine, Wenxin Keli, a Chinese herb, Olive oil, [avocado](#) oil, grape seed oil, Dark chocolate (or products with 70 percent or more cocoa), Garlic, . [Nuts](#) – choose a variety such as walnuts, sunflower seeds, almonds, pecans, Fruits – choose a variety such blueberries, cherries, raspberries, strawberries, pineapple, or apples. Reduce how much red meat you eat
- [Essential Oils](#): like lemongrass oil, frankincense, ginger oil, and helichrysum oil (which double as anti-inflammatories. **Soothe yourself with aromatherapy.** Sprinkle a few drops of relaxing lavender oil onto a handkerchief, and inhale the pleasant aroma. Or try rubbing two drops of bitter orange oil on your chest.

To calm a flutter

- As soon as you notice an irregular heartbeat, sit down and prop up your feet. **Breathe slowly and deeply**, letting your belly expand with each inhalation. If you focus on **slow, steady breathing**, your heartbeat will probably return to its normal rhythm right away.
- If the fluttering continues, do the **Valsalva maneuver**: Pinch your nose, close your mouth, then try to exhale. Since you can't, because your nose and mouth are closed, you'll bear down as if you were forcing a bowel movement (or pushing out a baby during childbirth). The brief rise in blood pressure that results should help reset your heart. The Valsalva technique is named after seventeenth-century Italian anatomist Antonio Maria Valsalva.
- **Cough forcefully**. Like the Valsalva maneuver, coughing increases pressure inside your chest. Sometimes that's all you need to restore your heart to its regular rhythm.

Get some water

- Take a few **gulps of cold water**. No one knows exactly why this helps, but some people get instant results. One theory is that the swallowed water causes your esophagus to press against your heart, and that nudge restores the rhythm.

- Alternatively, **splash ice-cold water** on your face. The shock might be enough to do the trick.

Expanded summary

2. Eat an Anti-Inflammatory Diet

One of the leading contributors of heart problems and heart disease is inflammation, which leads to [free radical damage](#). [Obesity](#) also seems to raise the risk for heart problems and AF, which makes it even more important to eat a low-processed, balanced diet. Foods to avoid that promote inflammation most include:

- refined vegetable oils (like corn, safflower and soybean oils)
- refined carbohydrates and processed snacks that contain them
- conventional, factory-farm meat
- added sugars
- [trans fats](#)
- pasteurized, conventional dairy products
- high-[sodium foods](#) (many packaged foods and fast foods)
- In the case of artrial fibrillations, high amounts of caffeine and alcohol can also make the problem worse. Vulnerability varies from person to person depending on how severe the AF is, but research shows that [binge drinking](#) (having five drinks in two hours for men or four drinks for women) puts you at higher risk for AF as does drinking caffeine, particularly if you have a [caffeine overdose](#) in your diet

These foods can also increase gastrointestinal disorders, thyroid disorders, autoimmune disorders like [leaky gut syndrome](#) and diabetes, which are all associated with an increased risk for AF.

The healthiest type of diet to help prevent heart complications includes the following nutrient-dense, [anti-inflammatory foods](#) listed below. Most of these foods are included in the [Mediterranean diet](#), which is one of the most popular and effective anti-inflammatory diets there is, shown to help reduce symptoms of various cardiovascular diseases and lower cholesterol, blood sugar and triglycerides levels.

- Fiber-rich and antioxidant-rich vegetables: leafy greens, beets, carrots, cruciferous vegetables like Brussels sprouts, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, kale, artichokes, onions, etc.
- Fruit: all kinds, especially berries and citrus fruits
- Herbs and spices: especially anti-inflammatories like turmeric (curcumin), raw garlic, basil, chili peppers, cinnamon, curry powder, ginger, rosemary and thyme
- Traditional teas: green tea, oolong or white tea
- Soaked/sprouted legumes and beans
- Clean, lean proteins: raw, unpasteurized dairy products, cage-free eggs, grass-fed beef and pasture-raised poultry
- Heart-[healthy fats](#): nuts, seeds, avocados, wild-caught fish, coconut oil and extra virgin olive oil
- [Red wine](#) and coffee in moderation (but best to talk to your doctor first)

3. Lower Stress

Stress contributes to inflammation and atrial fibrillation, not to mention many other forms of chronic disorders, including heart disease. A 2010 report published in the *Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing* stated that patients diagnosed with AF experience more psychological distress on average than do healthy controls. Unfortunately, psychological distress in forms of anxiety and depression in patients with heart failure or coronary artery disease have been found to increase the risk for mortality and complications. (4)

Intense stress and anger can even cause heart rhythm problems to worsen. Sleep, relaxation and rest are important for healing fibrillations since they help [balance hormones](#) and control the release of cortisol, which can impair normal immune and heart functions when present in abnormally high amounts. In fact, sleep disorders, such as [obstructive sleep apnea](#) and mood-related disorders, worsened by cortisol are tied to heightened risk for AF.

Some simple ways to [lower stress](#) include: nixing caffeine, smoking and alcohol; getting proper sleep; practicing [healing prayer](#) and/or meditating; journaling; doing something creative; spending time with family and pets; and using [essential oils](#) like lemon, frankincense, ginger and helichrysum (which double as anti-inflammatories).

4. Exercise

One of the best ways to fight stress is through exercise, which can be helpful for improving heart health as long as it's medically cleared first. A 2013 report published in the *Canadian Journal of Cardiology* found that short-term, ongoing exercise training of low, moderate or vigorous intensity in adults with permanent atrial fibrillation significantly improved heartbeat control, functional capacity, muscular strength and power, activities of daily living, and quality of life. (5)

Some evidence shows that AF in athletes can be triggered by a rapid heart rate called a [supraventricular tachycardia](#), so always get checked out if you notice changing symptoms when exercising. (6) Talk to your doctor about a safe way to implement regular exercise that you enjoy and can stick with, including low-impact exercises like swimming, cycling or brisk [walking to lose weight](#).

5. Reduce Intake of Chemicals, Toxins and Air Pollution

Heart disease and inflammation are tied to free radical damage (also called oxidative stress) and low antioxidant levels in the body. Free radicals can accumulate in the body due to a poor diet, environmental pollutants, alcohol, smoking, unhealthy fats and a [lack of sleep](#).

Studies suggest that air pollution is related to [thrombosis](#), inflammation and endothelial dysfunction. (7) These cause oxidation that wreaks havoc in the body — damaging cells, breaking down tissue, mutating DNA and overloading the immune system. You can greatly lower your exposure to toxins by buying as much organically grown produce as you can, using natural beauty and household products, and reducing intake of cigarettes or recreational drugs.

6. Use an Over-the-Counter Anti-Inflammatory

Some supplements can also help speed up the body's ability to detox, fight inflammation and heal itself, including:

- Omega-3 fish oil (supplements or one tablespoon of fish oil daily, such as [cod liver oil](#))
- Curcumin and garlic supplements
- [Coenzyme Q10](#)
- [Carotenoids](#)
- Selenium
- Vitamins C, D and E

7. Essential Oils

There are many natural plant-derived [essential oils](#) that can help manage inflammation and symptoms related to heart disease. ([21](#)) Some include lemongrass oil, helichrysum oil and ginger oil. ([22](#), [23](#), [24](#))

The active ingredients found in plants are their most potent in this concentrated form. [Ginger essential oil](#), for example, contains the highest levels of anti-inflammatory gingerol, and helichrysum oil kicks off inflammatory enzyme inhibition, free-radical scavenging activity and corticoid-like effects. I recommend diffusing these oils in your home, inhaling them directly and applying them topically to your skin (such as over your chest) after mixing them with a carrier oil like coconut oil.

8 Natural Treatments for Angina

1. If you smoke, quit.
2. Acupuncture may help relieve chronic stable angina symptoms.
3. Take 60 milligrams to 100 milligrams of CoQ10 daily for heart health and to reduce symptoms.
4. Take 1,000 milligrams of L-carnitine daily to relieve symptoms, including chest pains.
5. Take a high-quality fish oil to improve cholesterol levels and cardiac health.
6. Start exercising (with physician approval). Start slowly with walking, and add yoga, pilates or tai chi.
7. Reduce stress with natural stress relievers, including cognitive behavioral therapy, meditation, deep breathing exercise or whatever helps you to de-stress.
8. Try EECF. Talk to your doctor to find out if you are a candidate for EECF to help relieve symptoms and improve cardiac health.

Natural remedies for heart palpitations

About 36 million times a year, your heart beats exactly when it's supposed to. So why sweat it if your ticker occasionally marches to a different drummer? Because palpitations can be unnerving. Fortunately, there are ways to stop them almost as soon as they start. Better yet, prevent them from happening in the first place by practicing stress-reducing techniques, screening your medications, and adding some heart-healthy foods and supplements to your menu.

Heart palpitations and stress

- If you are experiencing palpitations, there is a good chance that **stress is to blame**. In fact, palpitations can be the body's way of alerting you that your stress level has exceeded the safe range. Meditating helps get your stress level back down. So set aside 30 minutes each day just to let your body relax and your mind unwind.

- **Soothe yourself with aromatherapy.** Sprinkle a few drops of relaxing lavender oil onto a handkerchief, and inhale the pleasant aroma. Or try rubbing two drops of bitter orange oil on your chest.
- Get at least seven hours of sleep each night. Being tired can set the stage for out-of-rhythm heartbeats.

Get moving

- Get at least 30 minutes of **aerobic exercise** three or four times a week. Walking, running, and tennis are all excellent choices. Just be sure you don't become too focused on beating your previous time or outscoring an opponent that will increase your stress. Exercise at a pace that allows you to comfortably carry on a conversation.
- Warm up for 10 minutes before each workout and for 10 minutes afterward.

Eat, drink, and be moderate

- Eat plenty of fish. **Salmon and mackerel** in particular contain high levels of heart-healthy **omega-3 fatty acids**.
- **Avoid eating too much** at one time. Forcing your body to digest a huge load of food diverts blood from your heart to your **digestive tract**. That can lead to palpitations.
- **Cut back on caffeine.** In some people, drinking caffeinated coffee, tea, or soft drinks triggers palpitations.

Supplements that might help

- Many people with irregular heart rhythms are low on magnesium. So you might try taking 400 milligrams of magnesium twice a day. (Off-limits if you have kidney disease.)
- **Take coenzyme Q10.** This naturally occurring substance, sold over the counter in pill form, helps keep your heart rhythm regular, especially if you have heart disease. Take 150 milligrams once a day with food.
- If you're not eating much fish, take 2 to 3 grams daily of cold-pressed marine fish oil, which is high in beneficial omega-3 fatty acids.

Check your meds

- The amino acid taurine helps quell irregular electrical impulses in the heart. Take 2 to 3 grams daily. Taurine is available by prescription.
- Many prescription and over-the-counter drugs can cause palpitations, so check the package insert. It might say something like: "Do not use this product if you have heart disease or high blood pressure." Or it might give a specific warning about the drug's effect on heartbeat. **Pay close attention to over-the-counter cold and allergy medications that contain decongestants.** One ingredient that is frequently implicated is pseudoephedrine.
- Some bronchodilators for asthma, such as terbutaline (Bricanyl), can increase the risk of palpitations. So can **antihistamines** like loratadine (Claritin). If you've been taking these, ask your doctor about switching to different medications.

- **Avoid any diet remedy or supplement containing the ingredient ma huang, or ephedra.** This can sharply increase your risk of irregular heartbeat or palpitations sometimes with dangerous consequences.
- Always check with your doctor before adjusting medication or taking any new supplements.

Natural Remedies and Alternate Therapies for Atrial Fibrillation By [Dr T. Jared Bunch, MD](#)

Energy Drinks: One of the challenges in working with patients who enjoy [energy drinks](#) it that they often contain many ingredients that can stimulate the heart in combination with very large doses of caffeine. Many times in a year I will see patients who experience heart arrhythmias, including atrial fibrillation, after consuming energy drinks.

Unfortunately, I have also cared for people who sustained a heart arrest while exercising and using energy drinks. The ingredient lists on these products often include known cardiac stimulants such as: tyrosine, phenylalanine, alpha lipoic acid, SAM-e, ginseng, tongkat ali, yohimbe, etc. These substances can have unpredictable effects on a heart under stress, such as with exercise. I would recommend avoiding the combination of intense exercise and consumption of these products.

Over-the-counter weight-loss products: Just like energy drinks, OTC weight-loss products often contain many different herbs and nonherbal ingredients that can act as cardiac stimulants and increase metabolism. These products can have variable effects on the heart and have unpredictable heart risks. If you have experienced palpitations, chest pains, dizziness or other heart side effects, I would recommend to not use these products until you have consulted with your physician. If you are using these products and experience any new heart symptoms, I would again recommend discontinuing use and speaking with your physician. When you meet with your physician bring in the medication bottle so you can go over all the ingredients in detail.

Alcohol: Atrial fibrillation was noted over a century ago in a [syndrome called Holiday Heart](#). People who drank large quantities of alcohol, had an increased risk of weakening of the heart muscle as well as fast irregular heart rhythms from the upper and lower heart chambers. The heart condition usually stabilizes once the alcohol intake has stopped. Unfortunately, with atrial fibrillation, even small quantities in susceptible people [can cause an abnormal heart rhythm](#). If alcohol is a trigger for your atrial fibrillation, keep a diary and you will see a pattern between your use and the development of the abnormal heart rhythm shortly thereafter, within the next few days. Fortunately, in most people moderate consumption of alcohol does not result in a significant risk of atrial fibrillation.

Marijuana: Similar to alcohol, in some people recreational marijuana use can increase risk of atrial fibrillation. We will learn more about the true risks of marijuana use and atrial fibrillation as its use becomes broader for medicinal purposes.

High doses of vitamin D: This vitamin affects how your body takes in and uses calcium. Your heart creates electrical impulses using common electrolytes in our body: sodium, potassium, magnesium, and calcium. With very high levels of calcium, the heart can more rapidly conduct electrical impulses. Atrial fibrillation is the conduction of very rapid electrical impulses at times upwards to 300 beats per minute in the upper heart chambers. When doctors look at body levels of vitamin D (derived from a blood sample) we find a much higher risk of atrial fibrillation in patients with levels higher than 100 nmol/L of vitamin D. You have to take a lot of vitamin D to reach these levels, such as a dose of 10,000 IU (international units) or more per day. Sometimes you need these types of doses if you are deficient in

vitamin D. My advice is if you are taking high levels of vitamin D, don't stop, but contact your physician, have your blood level of vitamin D measured, and adjust your dose if needed.

Dietary fiber: In an interesting study of 4,526 people who were followed for at least four years, higher total fiber intake reduced risk of atrial fibrillation. In this study, published February 2011 in *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, total fiber was calculated from the cereals, fruit, vegetables, and legumes food groups. Depending on the amount of fiber eaten, participants had reduced their risk of atrial fibrillation by 14 to 36 percent. High-fiber food sources have a myriad of other health benefits for gastrointestinal health, on your cholesterol levels and blood pressure, and levels of body inflammation. The best way that I know to begin a very heart-healthy lifestyle is to load up on whole foods, in particular fruits, vegetables, and legumes.

Magnesium: If your body levels of [magnesium](#) decline, your heart can become more irritable and develop extra beats or abnormal heart rhythms. In a study of intravenous magnesium in patients who had atrial fibrillation, the likelihood of magnesium being effective in treating the abnormal rhythm was 60 percent higher in comparison to patients that received a placebo alone. We often use magnesium supplements in patients who are experiencing extra or skipped beats. I am not aware of long-term trials that show magnesium supplements alone can reduce your likelihood of developing atrial fibrillation. Magnesium can build up in your body, so if you use supplements make sure your doctor measures your body levels so magnesium doesn't become excessive.

Anti-inflammatory herbal and nonherbal food sources: Your level of body inflammation is associated with higher risks of [coronary artery disease](#), heart attack, heart failure, and atrial fibrillation. The higher your level of body inflammation (often measured by a common blood test called CRP) the higher risk you have of developing these complications. Many food sources are considered anti-inflammatory and have been shown in very small studies to reduce body inflammation. Most of these agents have not been directly studied as approaches to treat or prevent atrial fibrillation. So we are making a bit of a jump to say they will benefit your risk of atrial fibrillation. What we are assuming is that if inflammation and atrial fibrillation are linked, and a certain food source reduces inflammation, then the food source will reduce atrial fibrillation. In the complex environment of the body, such statements are often not completely true, but most of the agents I will describe I believe in general promote healthy living anyway.

1. Olive oil, [avocado](#) oil, grape seed oil
2. Green tea
3. Dark chocolate (or products with 70 percent or more cocoa)
4. Garlic
5. Fish (not fried)
6. [Nuts](#) – choose a variety such as walnuts, sunflower seeds, almonds, pecans
7. Fruits – choose a variety such as blueberries, cherries, raspberries, strawberries, pineapple, or apples. Your plate should have a variety of colors, or it is not diversified enough
8. [Whole grain bread](#) can add a benefit of lowering inflammation regardless of your current lifestyle and diet.
9. Reduce how much red meat you eat
10. If you smoke, quit. Cigarette smoking in even small amounts significantly increases body levels of inflammation. This risk includes to some extent exposure to second hand smoking. Regarding all of these lifestyle measures, stopping smoking is one of the best ways to lower your body inflammation.
11. Wenxin Keli – This Chinese herb has purported benefits in reducing abnormal heart rhythms, body inflammation levels, and heart failure. Information on this herb is relatively new to us in the United

States, but intriguing animal models provide us with more understanding of its potential benefits. Animals that received wenxin keli had their [atrial fibrillation suppressed](#), and were less likely to go back into atrial fibrillation, published in January 2012 *Heart Rhythm*.

What's exciting to me is that the heart rhythm effect was largely selective to the upper chambers of the heart, atria, and wenxin keli was less likely to cause abnormal heart rhythms in the lower chambers of the heart; a common problem with current medications called antiarrhythmic medications used to treat atrial fibrillation.

Restore an Energy-Deficient Atrium in the Heart

The upper chambers of the heart beat very rapidly in atrial fibrillation and, over time, the muscle can breakdown and develop fibrosis and scars that become sources of additional atrial fibrillation. A few supplements are aimed at keeping the energy stores in the heart elevated. Like many substances, no formal studies support their use in atrial fibrillation prevention or treatment.

1. Coenzyme Q-10: Coenzyme Q-10 is a naturally occurring enzyme in your body. When your heart is exposed to oxidative stress the cells can die (called apoptosis) and fibrosis can develop. Coenzyme Q-10 protects the cells from oxidative stress (which is why it's called an antioxidant) as well as the energy store houses of the cells, the mitochondria.

In patients with [heart failure](#), Coenzyme Q-10 may improve heart function. Heart failure is often a consequence of progressive fibrosis and scarring of the bottom chambers of the heart. There may be a similar benefit in the upper heart chambers. For now, it's an unproven possibility, but it is an intriguing therapeutic option that needs additional study.

2. L-Carnitine: This non-essential amino acid can be synthesized by the body. Carnitine transports fatty acids to the mitochondria of the cells to be utilized for energy. People often use L-carnitine in supplement form to boost energy. By improving the energy stores of the upper chambers of the heart, scars, fibrosis, and disease progression may be reduced. You can get L-Carnitine as a supplement, but you also get this amino acid by eating red meat. However, when we consume L-Carnitine, the bacteria in our gut digest it into a compound called trimethylamine-N-oxide (TMAO). TMAO, in mice, causes atherosclerosis which is the primary mechanism behind heart attacks and narrowed coronary arteries. In vegans, the amount of TMAO produced is much lower than in people who eat red meat, reported in *Nature Medicine*, May 2013. But not all studies with L-Carnitine show harm. However, with potential risk and no known benefit for atrial fibrillation, I would avoid its use for this purpose at this time.

3. Hawthorn: I find that hawthorn is used by my patients for just about every medical condition. For centuries, hawthorn people have used to treat problems with the circulation and respiratory systems. Hawthorn is an anti-oxidant and may have direct benefit to organs at risk from oxidative stress (free radicals), and cellular death, and fibrosis.

In a study of 143 patients with heart failure, patients who took Hawthorn extract reported less heart failure symptoms and had better exercise times on a bicycle exercise test, published 2003 in *Phytomedicine*. In another study of 2,681 patients with heart failure, hawthorn preparations reduced the risk of sudden death, published December 2008 in the [European Journal of Heart Failure](#).

Hawthorn also has a positive impact on chest pain and may in the setting of diabetes reduce blood pressure. Many of these benefits may help reduce atrial fibrillation risk and recurrence. Use hawthorn only after talking with your physician if you have atrial fibrillation. This is because many of the common

medications used to slow your heart rate in atrial fibrillation are affected by hawthorn. Examples include digoxin, [metoprolol](#) (beta blockers), and cardizem ([calcium channel blockers](#)). Also, hawthorn may increase the effect of nitrates that are used for chest pain and can result in an unsafe drop in your blood pressure.

Exercise for Atrial Fibrillation Prevention

Exercise in general promotes heart health, in addition to weight loss, lower blood pressure, and a lower risk of [sleep apnea](#). Improvement in heart health directly reduces risk of atrial fibrillation. This is particularly the case if you keep your blood pressure under control throughout your life. [High blood pressure](#) is one of the most common causes of atrial fibrillation. Similarly, sleep apnea risk goes up with weight gain. In people with sleep apnea that is untreated, the risk of atrial fibrillation nears 50 percent. Avoiding heart problems as much as possible by maintaining an [ideal body weight](#) is a very good preventative strategy.

The interesting aspect of exercise is that too much of a good thing may not be a good thing. Male athletes with consistently low heart rates had a 60 percent increased risk of developing atrial fibrillation compared to men whose heart rates that were higher, in a study of more than 2,000 men published 2013.

In a study of 52,755 long-distance cross country skiers, those who had shorter race times and those who competed in multiple events had the highest risk of developing atrial fibrillation. The authors observed a 30 percent increased risk of atrial fibrillation in the most active athletic group, published December 2013 in the *European Heart Journal*.

With exercise, moderation is a good thing. Look to minimize extensive training periods when your heart rate remains elevated for greater than 60 minutes a day. For those that need more exercise than this, do interval training in which rest periods are part of your routine. [Autopsies of extreme endurance athletes](#) show small regions of scar and fibrosis in all chambers of the heart. These are the very changes we are hoping to avoid to decrease risk of atrial fibrillation.

Stroke Prevention Steps

Regarding anticoagulation that is required in most patients with atrial fibrillation, there are no proven natural substitutes. No substances that have anticoagulation properties are reliable, predictable, and proven to prevent [stroke](#) if you have atrial fibrillation. In patients with atrial fibrillation, prevention of stroke is our primary concern.

I would strongly suggest as you approach your atrial fibrillation, consider stroke prevention separately if you want to try natural therapies. The most common therapy used for stroke prevention today was a natural therapy originally discovered after cattle ate sweet clover and bled to death. The anticoagulant properties of sweet clover, used in much lower doses, were used to make the drug [warfarin \(Coumadin, Jantoven\)](#).

These same properties are found in many other plants. These anticoagulation properties are unique in their effect in different people and are strongly influenced by other drugs or supplements you may be taking. Warfarin requires close supervision by your physician so the dose you are taking is safe. At

minimum, warfarin is an example of the challenges we face as physicians in using anticoagulation to reduce your risk of stroke, but at the same time keep you safe from bleeding risks.

In summary, you can approach atrial fibrillation in many ways. I think there are many good preventative options and a lot of good alternative choices. Choose these options carefully and engage your physician as a partner so you can make the best choice for your health, happiness, and longevity.