MYOCARDIAL INFARCTION IN ATHLETES

■ ■ ■ Description

Myocardial infarction is the medical term for heart attack. The occurrence of a heart attack usually indicates that coronary artery disease is present. When coronary artery disease is present, blood flow to the heart muscle can be compromised. This situation has implications for physical activity, both as a risk and as a treatment.

■ ■ ■ Common Signs and Symptoms

- Pain in the chest, worsened or brought on by exertion
- Shortness of breath, worsened or brought on by exertion
- Pain radiating to the left shoulder or jaw
- Cold sweat
- Palpitations
- Sense of doom

■ ■ ■ Risk Increases With

- Family history of heart disease
- Tobacco abuse
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- High cholesterol
- Sedentary lifestyle

■ ■ ■ Risks of Exercise

With increased exertion, heart rate and contractility increase. This results in a higher demand for nutrients to the working heart muscle. To function well while exercising, the heart muscle requires oxygen, which is delivered by the flow of blood through the coronary arteries. If the coronary arteries are diseased, oxygen delivery is not adequate. Without oxygen, heart muscle cells can die, or infarct, resulting in heart attacks. Therefore exercise programs for individuals with heart disease must be monitored.

■ ■ ■ Preventive Effects of Exercise

Exercise can help reverse or limit the progression of artery blockages and improve the heart's oxygen supply. Furthermore, exercise increases the good cholesterol in the blood, lowers blood pressure, promotes weight loss, and decreases the likelihood of developing diabetes. Exercise also reduces fatigue, motivating many patients to stick with a program. Patients with heart disease should start an exercise program cautiously and only after medical evaluation and treatment, if indicated. Cardiac rehabilitation programs provide guided regimens that you can follow while being supervised for symptoms or signs of compromised cardiac function.

Notes:

Notes and suggestions