
Encouraging Heart Attack Survivors to Exercise



New research shows that only a small number (16 percent) of heart attack survivors get the recommended amount of physical activity in the weeks after hospitalisation. Despite evidence showing benefits from exercise, these patients still fear that straining their heart through exertion will cause chest pain or another heart attack, according to researchers from Columbia University Medical Center (CUMC) and NewYork-Presbyterian. The study is published in Journal of the American College of Cardiology.

Exercise has been proven to lower the risk of having another heart attack in patients with acute coronary syndrome (ACS), which includes heart attack and unstable angina (chest pain). "In prior decades, heart attack survivors were counselled to remain in bed for many weeks," said lead author Ian M. Kronish, MD, MPH, Florence Irving Assistant Professor of Medicine at CUMC.

Current guidelines strongly recommend that ACS patients get at least 30 minutes of moderate aerobic activity, such as brisk walking, at least five days per week in the first two weeks after hospital discharge. Previous studies, which relied on self-reporting, have been unable to provide a reliable estimate of how many patients achieve this goal.

For this study, Dr. Kronish and colleagues measured the amount and intensity of physical activity with a wearable activity monitor in 620 heart attack survivors. Participants were instructed to wear the device for 10 hours, or more, at least three days per week during the first month after hospitalisation.

Clinician-supervised exercise programmes for heart attack survivors have been shown to counteract patients' fears and encourage more physical activity. However, as Dr. Kronish noted, participation in these programmes remains poor. The doctor says researchers and clinicians should find ways to increase participation in such exercise programmes, suggesting that mHealth tools may help in this regard.

"Nowadays, there are several consumer products that can be used to track physical activity at home. Perhaps the future holds ways to remotely monitor patients and to provide positive feedback and counselling outside of a hospital setting," adds Dr. Kronish.

Source: [Columbia University Medical Center](#)

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