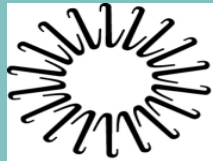


INTIMACY & HEART DISEASE



Cardiovascular Institute

Rhode Island Hospital • The Miriam Hospital

Lifespan Partners

**Center for Cardiac Fitness
Cardiac Rehab Program
The Miriam Hospital**

CONCERNS

- **Sex will cause another heart attack**
- **Reduced sexual drive/functioning**
- **Partner's fears**
- **Talking to doctors about sex**



MYTHS

- Sex is never safe after a cardiac event
- Sex is not important to older adults

■ INTIMACY IS IMPORTANT

- **Intimate relationships** involve affection, trust, and closeness
- Intimacy can include physical contact of a sexual nature, but can also be expressed in other ways
- Intimate relationships can be protective against the harmful effects of stress

PHYSICAL EXERTION OF SEX

- Exertion is similar as mild to moderate intensity exercise
- BP and HR briefly increase during intercourse and quickly return to baseline
- **Special circumstances increase strain**
 - New partners, new locations
 - Following heavy meal or alcohol
 - Certain positions – on top, lying flat

METABOLIC EQUIVALENT OF ENERGY EXPENDITURE (MET)

Activity	METs
Walking at 2 mph, level ground	2
Walking at 3 mph, level ground	3
Preorgasmic sexual activity	2-3
Orgasm	3-4
Cycling at 10 miles per hour	6-7
Walking on treadmill during stress test, 12 minutes up to 4 mph with incline	10-13

IMPAIRED SEXUAL FUNCTIONING

- **Medication side effects**
 - **Diuretics, BP meds, antiarrhythmics, anti-angina, cholesterol, antidepressants**
- **Medical illness and recovery**
- **Depression**
- **Fear or worries**
- **Body image concerns/self-esteem**

TREATMENTS

- **Medications (Viagra, Cialis, Levitra)**
 - **Not for everyone!**
- **Vacuum pump**
- **Suppositories, implants**
- **Moisturizers, lubricants (Replens, K-Y)**
- **Sex therapy, couples therapy, and/or psychotherapy**

TALKING WITH YOUR DOCTOR

- Be assertive
- Introduce at beginning
- Ask other providers



■ **PARTNERS' FEARS**

- **Normal reaction**
- **Communication**
- **Patience**



■ MAINTAINING INTIMACY

- **Talk about your feelings**
- **Participate in common activities**
- **Make alone time and go slowly**
- **Experiment with alternative sexual techniques**
- **Have fun and don't put too much pressure on each other**

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- **Increase overall strength**
- **Don't wear restrictive clothing**
- **Healthy lifestyle**
- **Diabetes**
- **Intimacy– not just sex!**



3 KEY POINTS

-  **Seek information**
-  **Communication**
-  **Patience**