

Ask The Experts

Q I am a 21-year-old man who has a heart condition – supraventricular tachycardia (SVT).

I was diagnosed five years ago and have had minor and short episodes of SVT. I did not go for ablation and my condition seems to have stabilised recently.

Doctors have advised me not to carry heavy objects and to avoid strenuous exercise.

However, I recently gained some weight and wish to do some exercise to shed the excess weight.

Is there any advice on what I should be careful about?

I have not been doing much exercise since I was diagnosed with this condition.

A Supraventricular tachycardia (SVT) is a type of fast heartbeat disease (tachy-arrhythmia) that is relatively common among young people.

It usually starts and stops suddenly, without warning.

Most commonly, patients with SVT have fast heartbeats (palpitations) which come on abruptly.

Other symptoms may include fainting, light-headedness, dizziness,



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chest pain or shortness of breath.

It is rarely life threatening.

SVT happens because of a problem with the heart's electrical system.

The fast heartbeat can last from a few minutes to hours, but usually lasts for 10 to 15 minutes.

It often happens when you are at rest. But in some people, exercise can trigger it.

From your history, it appears that your SVT is relatively stable and well-controlled.

You should be able to exercise at a moderate degree without triggering an SVT attack.

Advice on exercising with a heart condition

Besides, weight loss is achieved by a combination of dietary intervention and exercise.

Therefore, you can try a regular moderate intensity exercise programme and, at the same time, control your dietary caloric intake.

You may want to become familiar with some vagal manoeuvres that could terminate SVT in some circumstances.

These techniques are designed to stimulate the vagus nerve which can help to reduce the speed of the electrical impulses in your heart and stop episodes of SVT.

But these techniques work in

fewer than one in three cases.

There is no standard way to perform this manoeuvre, but it could involve blowing air against closed nostrils and a closed mouth.

You could also immerse your face in ice-cold water or cough.

Your doctor may have prescribed a standby anti-arrhythmic medication for you to take during an attack.

The final option is to consider radiofrequency ablation, which has a high chance of permanently curing this medical condition.



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cardiologist and physician at The Heart Doctors Clinic at Mount Alvernia Hospital

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www.heartconsultants.com.sg

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Tel: 6358-0650

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Medical Centre D #05-56
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