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Cardiovascular Diseases and Physical Activities



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Introduction

Several studies have provided evidence of positive effects of exercise on the cardiovascular system: sport, played constantly with mild or moderate intensity, can reduce morbidity and mortality associated with cardiovascular disease and improve physical performance and quality of life for those who practice it. Furthermore, the aerobic type of regular exercise is able to significantly reduce many of the major risk factors of cardiovascular diseases, such as high cholesterol levels, being overweight, and diabetes. For these reasons, in the cardiovascular field, sport can have a therapeutic effect.

Despite these benefits, exercise can lead to some risks, in particular for the cardiovascular system. Exercise, in fact, can help trigger acute events, such as myocardial infarction, angina pectoris, arrhythmias, and sudden death. Regular physical activity, especially if there is high stress on the cardiovascular system, may also be responsible for an unfavorable evolution of some heart diseases.

Everyone who is about to start regular exercise should be subjected to careful cardiac evaluation. The physician's role is therefore crucial in activating an adequate program of preventive screening to verify the existence of clinically silent heart disease in apparently healthy individuals, as well as, in the case of already diagnosed heart disease, to stratify the risk associated with physical activity and activate the therapeutic interventions that may be needed.

It is also essential that the cardiac patient who has decided to undertake an exercise program be constantly monitored to prevent adverse cardiovascular events and, if necessary, to have the training plan modified.