

## **Maintaining Heart Health as We Age**

Natural variations in the heart rate are an important measure of health < not only of the heart, but of the entire body. If your "heart rate variability" (HRV) is low, it's an indication that your autonomic nervous system isn't functioning properly. That's not a good sign, considering that this system is responsible for maintaining balance and control of nearly 90% of the body's functions.

HRV is generally lower in the elderly population, but maintaining healthy variations in our heart rate can help prevent heart attacks and other cardiac problems. A study in *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise* found that regular physical activity was effective in increasing HRV slightly over 24-hour periods, and moderately during the daytime.

The 51 elderly subjects (average age: 67 years) were divided into a non-exercising control group and an exercise group that trained three times a week for six months; each 45-minute training session consisted of jogging/walking, stretching, and various aerobic exercises. After six months, heart rate variations were higher in the exercise group compared with the group that did not exercise.

If you're not sure about how healthy your heart is, or if you'd like more information on how to maintain a healthy heart and a healthy body as you get older, talk to your doctor of chiropractic.

### *Reference:*

Schuit AJ, Van Amelsvoort LG, Verheij TC, et al. Exercise training and heart rate variability in older people. *Medicine & Science in Sports & Exercise*, June 1999: Vol. 31, No. 6, pp816-821.



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