

Biofeedback Exercises

Biofeedback is an alternative medical technique that uses electrical signals from your body to teach you how to consciously control processes normally under unconscious or reflexive control. It is used as an added treatment for a variety of disorders, including pain, high blood pressure and anxiety. Typically, your doctor will tailor your biofeedback exercises to the specific needs of your condition.

Basics

Biofeedback, also called biofeedback training, is commonly used for a number of purposes, including elimination or reduction of drug-based treatment, alternative treatment when medication proves ineffective, increased involvement of patients in the treatment process and nonmedical intervention for health problems in pregnant women. In addition to the conditions listed above, you may undergo biofeedback as a treatment option for ailments such as incontinence, fibromyalgia, motion sickness, constipation, chemotherapy side effects, asthma, certain heart problems and a circulation disorder called Raynaud's disease.

Biofeedback Sessions

At the start of a biofeedback session, a trained therapist will attach wired devices called electrodes to your skin. These electrodes will relay information about various involuntary body processes to an attached monitor. Your therapist will measure the levels of these processes and then guide you through a series of mental exercises that can help you control your body's reactions to disease or stress. If you practice these exercises enough, you can eventually learn to control your body's reactions outside of the training environment.

Specific Approaches

Available biofeedback devices monitor different types of body processes. For example, thermal biofeedback devices measure your skin temperature. Electroencephalographs, also called neurofeedback devices, measure electrical activity generated by your brain. Electromyographs measure levels of tension in your musculature. The specific type of biofeedback exercise used for treatment depends on the type of ailment present. Individual exercise sessions can typically be completed in less than an hour. Depending on your circumstances, you may need anywhere from eight to 20 total biofeedback sessions. Once you have completed formal feedback training, your therapist will usually provide you with exercises that you can perform at home in sessions that last anywhere from five to 10 minutes per day.

Considerations

Doctors don't know precisely why biofeedback exercises work, according to the University of Maryland Medical Center. However, many of the ailments that respond to biofeedback are either triggered or worsened by mental stress, and relaxation may be the key factor in the success of biofeedback programs. If you have a health problem, ask your doctor if biofeedback exercises can help reduce or control your symptoms.