

Getting
the Best
AF
Care

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HOW TO **ADVOCATE** FOR **YOUR OWN CARE**



What steps help ensure the best possible atrial fibrillation care?

GOOD NEWS!

THERE ARE SEVERAL STEPS YOU CAN TAKE
to be your own best advocate.

1. TAKE A POSITIVE APPROACH



Discussing your questions and concerns may be difficult.

YOU MAY TELL YOURSELF:

“I’m worried that my questions make me sound uninformed.”

“My provider is qualified for this, I’m not.”

“I don’t want to take up the staff’s time or be a bother when I know they’re busy.”



Although understandable, dismiss those concerns.

REMINDE YOURSELF OF THESE FACTS:

“Asking questions makes it obvious I’m invested.”

“I’m the only one qualified to fully share MY experience.”

“It’s much worse to keep silent about my concerns; they may develop into problems if they remain unaddressed.”



BUT WHAT IF I AM STILL UNSURE?

It's normal; anyone with a heart condition will probably feel anxious until they get the problem managed. Your healthcare provider needs to understand what AF does to you and the impact on your life and family, so it's good to be open about how you feel. Studies have shown that strong collaboration between patients and healthcare providers can greatly improve health outcomes.



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2. ACCEPT HELP WHEN IT'S OFFERED

Take along someone to help you record important details as well as boost your sense of confidence and safety. Consider asking if they would mind being a part of your care team.



3. DISCUSS YOUR PRESCRIPTIONS

Discussing your medication management routine can help you understand and manage side effects and avoid making mistakes. Understand the importance of taking your medications properly and on time.



4. BE OPEN ABOUT YOUR SYMPTOMS AND CONCERNS

Even the embarrassing ones. They can help your provider understand how your condition may be affecting you and important recommendations you may need.



5. ASK ABOUT NEWER OPTIONS

Ask about newer treatment options. Unless you ask, your healthcare provider may not consider trying new options that may offer you a better quality of life.



6. INVEST IN THE PROCESS

Today's patients are partners in their own healthcare and their preferences and decisions are respected. It is your **RIGHT** and **RESPONSIBILITY** to ask questions of your healthcare provider and to share in making treatment decisions based on the best available evidence.



7. KNOW WHEN TO ASK FOR ANOTHER OPINION

If you do not feel a sense of partnership and shared goals with your healthcare provider, it's appropriate to look for another. Find someone who can help you reach your goals!

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HOW TO **DOCUMENT** YOUR AF-RELATED **MEDICAL HISTORY**



GATHER THE FACTS FOR EASY SHARING

- ▶ Knowing your medical history and keeping accurate records will be very helpful to your medical care team.
- ▶ If you're a smartphone user, you may want to explore using a health-record-keeping app so that your information will always be easy to find.

DOCUMENT YOUR HISTORY, SYMPTOMS, AND CONCERNS

Share key information. Be sure to include the following:

-  ● Specific concerns and why you're visiting
-  ● Symptoms of atrial fibrillation such as racing or pounding heart or unusual heartbeat
-  ● Known heart problems
-  ● Signs of earlier stroke or "warning strokes" (also called TIA or "mini-stroke")
-  ● Problems with frequent bruising or bleeding such as frequent nose bleeds, bleeding gums, or small wounds that bleed longer than expected
-  ● Blood sugar problems or diabetes-related concerns
-  ● Cholesterol problems
-  ● High blood pressure patterns
-  ● Problems with exercise or physical activity
-  ● Tobacco use and attempts you've made to quit
-  ● Medications you take including over-the-counter, natural supplements, and prescriptions

HOW TO **PARTNER**

WITH YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER



Collaborate with your provider. It takes two!

YOUR PROVIDER'S JOB IS:

- To investigate your concerns
- To take the right steps for an accurate diagnosis
- To consider the latest science that applies to your situation
- To recommend the best solutions based on the evidence, your lifestyle, and your concerns
- To help you have a good quality of life



YOUR JOB IS:

- To share your concerns and information about your lifestyle and quality of life
- To ask the right questions – and to clarify if you don't understand
- To take part in decisions about your treatment and understand why those decisions were made
- To follow the treatment plan you and your healthcare provider have agreed upon
- To watch for any problems
- To become actively involved in solving problems to reduce your risk of stroke and lower risks for additional heart problems



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PRACTICE GOOD COMMUNICATION



- Remember that open communication builds trust.
- If you have trouble understanding all that your doctor wants to share with you, ask him or her to slow down or find out if it's okay for you to record the discussion.
- Learn to lead with facts about your problems before sharing the emotions.
- Organize your questions for the visit with the most important first.
- Ask your healthcare provider for resources where you can learn about your condition and get answers to other questions you have.
- If you find online research about your condition that you want to share with your provider, remember to limit yourself to a brief summary or chart.

Learn more at:

signagainststroke.com

Sign Against Stroke
in Atrial Fibrillation



See also:

About AF



Lower Stroke Risk



Questions To Ask



Help from Family & Friends

