

About  
**AF**

1

# WHAT IS **ATRIAL FIBRILLATION?**



Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a heart rhythm problem.

- ▶ During atrial fibrillation, the heart does not beat regularly and with the proper rhythm. It may flutter or quiver and fail to contract properly.
- ▶ When the heartbeat is not strong and regular, the heart may not be pumping enough blood out of the heart.

That can cause more problems that may need attention, such as:

**BLOOD CLOTS  
or STROKE**

**OVERWORKED  
HEART**

**SYMPTOMS  
TO TREAT?**



## **BLOOD CLOTS & STROKE**

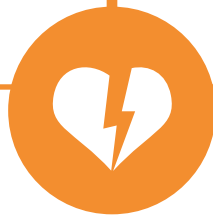
How does AF lead to blood clots?

- When blood pools in the heart from not being pumped properly, a clot can form.
- The blood clot can break free and get pumped out to the brain.
- A clot in the brain can get stuck in a blood vessel and cause a stroke. (See Stroke PDF)

**Take Action!**



**DISCUSS** your stroke risks with your doctor.



## **OVERWORKED HEART**

How does AF lead to heart failure?

- The quivering heart does not pump out enough blood.
- When the body doesn't get enough oxygen, the heart may work harder to compensate. Over time, it can cause heart failure.
- Lack of oxygen to the brain can lead to dementia and other problems.

**Take Action!**



**UNDERSTAND** if Afib has put your heart at risk.



## **DO YOU HAVE AF SYMPTOMS?**

check all that apply

- Fluttering or pounding in the heart or blood vessels
- Racing or fast heartbeat
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- Shortness of breath
- Dizziness
- Difficulty exercising

**Take Action!**



**REPORT** symptoms to your doctor.



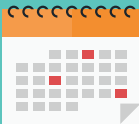


# IS AF THE SAME FOR EVERYONE?

## What are the different types of AF?

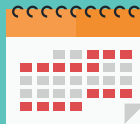
A person's AF type is determined by:

- ▶ How often or persistently the heart is in atrial fibrillation
- ▶ Whether or not the person is aware of symptoms
- ▶ Whether additional conditions affect AF risks



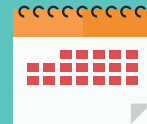
### **INTERMITTENT** or paroxysmal AF

- AF may come and go
- The heart returns to normal rhythm on its own
- May need rate control and possibly rhythm control medication



### **CONTINUOUS** persistent or longstanding persistent AF

- Persistent is more than 7 days
- Longstanding persistent is more than a year
- May require a rhythm reset or medications



### **PERMANENT** or permanent AF

- AF all the time
- A decision has been made not to restore normal rhythm





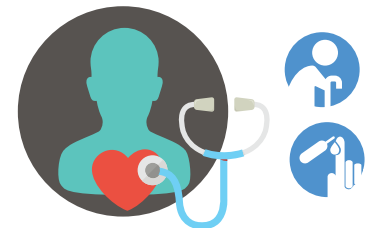
### **SILENT AF**

- Some people with AF cannot feel AF or its symptoms
- It's possible to be in AF without realizing it



### **AF WITH SYMPTOMS**

- Many people can feel it when their heart is in AF
- Symptoms can include:
  -  racing or unusual heartbeat
  -  fatigue or dizziness



### **AF + CONDITIONS**

- Related problems like heart valve issues can affect treatment needs.
- Other conditions can increase risks, including: heart disease, high blood pressure, diabetes, or advanced age.

About  
**AF**

3



## WHAT ARE THE **OPTIONS FOR TREATMENT?**

AF is treated in three main ways:

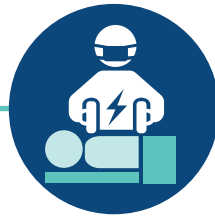
- ▶ Medications
- ▶ Non-surgical procedures
- ▶ Surgery



### **MEDICATIONS**

May Include:

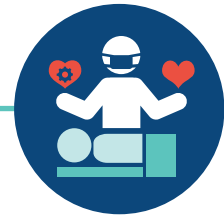
- Heart rate control
- Heart rhythm control
- Anticoagulants to reduce stroke risks



### **NON-SURGICAL procedures**

May Include:

- Cardioversion - a heart rhythm "reset"
- Catheter ablation
- AV node ablation



### **SURGERY**

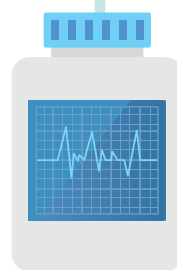
May Include:

- Open heart or minimally invasive
- Left atrial appendage occlusion (can be surgical or non-surgical)



#### **RATE CONTROL**

- Controlling the heart rate can help keep the heart from beating too fast
- Can also prevent dangerous types of heartbeats
- Does not stop AF



#### **RHYTHM CONTROL**

- Controlling the heart rhythm can help keep the heartbeat patterns normal
- Should stop AF



#### **ANTICOAGULANTS**

- Taking anticoagulants reduces risks for stroke
- Options are Warfarin or new anticoagulants
- Does not stop AF

About  
**AF**

4

WHERE CAN I

# LEARN MORE ABOUT MY OPTIONS?

Reduce your risks by educating yourself.

Find out more about these key topics.

## MEDICATIONS:

- **AFib Matters**  
<http://www.afibmatters.org/Treatments>
- **CardioSmart**  
<https://www.cardiosmart.org/Healthwise/abl2/009/abl2009>
- **My AFib Experience**  
<http://myafibexperience.org/healthcare-office/medications>

## PROCEDURES:

- **Heart Rhythm Society**  
<http://www.hrsonline.org/Patient-Resources/Treatment/Catheter-Ablation>
- **My AFib Experience**  
<http://myafibexperience.org/healthcare-office/treatment>
- **StopAfib.org**  
<http://www.stopafib.org/cured.cfm>

Learn more at:

[signagainststroke.com](http://signagainststroke.com)

Sign Against  
Stroke  
in Atrial Fibrillation



See also:

Lower  
Stroke Risk



Questions  
To Ask



Getting the Best  
AF Care



Help from Family  
& Friends



**StopAfib.org**

**Arrhythmia Alliance**  
Argentina



**ASSOCIAÇÃO**  
**BATE BATE**  
**CORAÇÃO**



**FUNDAÇÃO**  
**UDARU**  
**MÓZGU**

**SAFE**  
Stroke Alliance For Europe

