

**Help**  
from Family  
& Friends

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## HOW CAN I SUPPORT MY LOVED ONE WITH **ATRIAL FIBRILLATION?**



Your role is important for treatment success.

- ▶ Whether you're involved in daily decisions of care or only able to help at certain times, **your support is valuable**. Start with a quick overview of AF. (See About AF)
- ▶ People who have help and support are often more successful at reaching AF treatment goals. Your partnership and help can make a big difference.

Caring supporters can help patients develop routines for:

### HEALTHY LIFESTYLE



## ENCOURAGE GOOD HABITS

Small changes can reduce risks.

- Social support helps when improving diet, exercise, smoking habits, and sleep.
- Voice your support when your loved one improves.
- Participate in improvements together.

### Take Part



**JOIN IN** and improve your health, too.



### HEALTHCARE VISITS



## HELP LISTEN & TAKE NOTES

Treatment steps can feel overwhelming.

- Supportive family and friends can offer a second set of eyes and ears.
- Write key points about: **RISKS** to reduce **CHOICES** to make **PROCEDURES** to follow **TIMES** to check in

### Take Notes



**INVITE** the provider to dictate key points to you.



### TREATMENT PLANS



## HELP TRACK ESSENTIALS

Encourage keeping records for:

- Medications and Schedules
- Symptoms
- Activity level
- Progress toward goals
- Food and INR if managing warfarin
- Sleep

### Offer to Review



**SUPPORT** for tracking can improve results.



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## UNDERSTANDING AND MANAGING THE IMPACT OF AF

Atrial fibrillation affects family members and carers, too.

Family members and carers can reduce the burden by:

### UNDERSTANDING CHOICES

- A diagnosis of atrial fibrillation can be overwhelming for you as a carer and for your loved one, too. Mutual support can help you both fill in the knowledge gaps and reach treatment goals.
- Give and receive support as you discover more about your loved one's options.
- Invest in learning. Help with research to better understand AF. See additional resources in this set at [SignAgainstStroke.com](http://SignAgainstStroke.com).

### LOWERING PERSONAL STRESS

- Being a carer can be exhausting. Avoid sacrificing your own health to keep the patient healthy. Instead try to take care of yourself first, and then give where you can. Eat right, get exercise, and rest when you need to.
- Get social support, whether it be friends, family, or a carer support group.
- Find time to relax and rejuvenate. It's important that you both are as healthy as you can be, mentally and physically, so that the challenges you face are manageable.

## KNOWING THE SIGNS OF STROKE

- People who have AF are at greater risk for stroke, so it's important to know the signs and get treatment immediately if you suspect a stroke.
- If you notice patterns of forgetfulness or odd behaviors, mention these to the healthcare provider. They might be related to "warning strokes" or ministrokes.
- Signs can be remembered using **F.A.S.T.**

**F**ace: When asked to smile, part of the face droops.

**A**rms: When asked to raise both arms, one arm isn't fully raised.

**S**peech: When asked to speak, the words are garbled.

**T**ime: Call emergency immediately as time lost is brain lost.

- Additionally, numbness, weakness, confusion, sudden vision problems, or severe headache can also be signs of a stroke.



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SUPPORTING AND ENCOURAGING

## HEALTHY LIVING WITH AF

Carers can help loved ones stay positively engaged in life.

Your support for good health can provide a solid foundation for successful AF management:

### WITH RISK-LOWERING HABITS

- Learn how to participate in tasks like blood testing, monitoring heartbeat, and tracking blood pressure to help your loved one document health information.
- Medications can be extremely important for reducing risks and managing atrial fibrillation. Many AF medications must be taken on a regular schedule and carers can help maintain the routine.
- Carers sometimes play a critical role in keeping prescriptions filled.





## BY OFFERING COMPANIONSHIP

- Provide emotional support and understand the value of a good listener.
- Stay engaged with positive social opportunities.
- Plan outings with friends and family to keep positive emotions flowing and reduce possibilities of isolation and depression, but understand when your loved one doesn't feel up to it.



## BY INVESTING IN GOOD HEALTH

- Be a walking buddy and find ways to keep the exercise routine enjoyable.
- Shop for food and eat healthy meals together.
- If your loved one is taking warfarin, help plan meals accordingly.

Learn more at:

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

Sign Against  
Stroke  
in Atrial Fibrillation



See also:

About  
AF



Lower  
Stroke Risk



Questions  
To Ask



Getting the Best  
AF Care

