

Atrial Fibrillation (AFib) Treatment Options



Learn About:

1. Why treatment is important
2. Medicine options to reduce your symptoms
3. Non-medicine treatment options
4. Ways to decrease your risk of stroke

1. Why treatment is important

Treatment is important because it:

- Reduces your risk of stroke
- Improves your quality of life by decreasing your symptoms
- Reduces your risk of going to the hospital
- Reduces complications of atrial fibrillation

Most importantly, AFib can be managed using medicines or other treatments. AFib treatments vary from person to person. Your doctor will discuss the benefits and possible side effects with you before making a decision. It is not unusual to try different options until the best option is found.

2. Medicine options to reduce your symptoms

There are two types of medicines to treat AFib symptoms: **rate control medicine** and **rhythm control medicine**. Each of these types of medicines can have different side effects. Not all of them may be right for you. Your doctor will discuss the benefits and risks of each of these medicines with you. Continue to take your medicines even if your symptoms improve or go away. Your medicines reduce your risk of complications related to AFib. Do not stop taking your medicines without talking to your doctor first.

Medicine options to reduce your symptoms - continued

a) Rate control medicines

These slow your heart rate but do not prevent AFib from occurring. Common types of rate control medicines include:

- Beta-blockers: (Atenolol, Bisoprolol, Metoprolol, Propranolol)
- Calcium channel blockers: (Diltiazem, Verapamil)
- Digoxin

b) Rhythm control medicines

These help your heart stay in a normal rhythm or prevent AFib from occurring. Common types of rhythm control medicines include:

- Amiodarone
- Dronedarone
- Flecainide
- Propafenone
- Sotalol

3. Non-medicine treatment options

Electrical cardioversion

Electrical cardioversion is a brief, carefully monitored electrical 'shock' to your heart to put it back into a normal rhythm. It is a simple and safe treatment but it does not prevent future episodes of AFib. A machine called a defibrillator will apply a 'shock' to your heart by using two sticky pads that are put on your chest and back. You will get medicines during the procedure to make you sleep and feel comfortable.

Catheter ablation

Catheter ablation is a surgical procedure to try to prevent future episodes of AFib. It is fairly effective, but because it is an invasive procedure (surgery), it has risks.

Catheter ablation is suitable for some people with AFib, but not everyone. Discuss the details with your family doctor and cardiologist to find out if this procedure is suitable for you.

4. Medicines to decrease your risk of stroke

There are two types of medicines that decrease your risk of stroke: **antiplatelets** (an•ti•plate•lets) and **anticoagulants** (an•ti•co•ag•u•lants). These are sometimes called 'blood thinners'. They decrease your risk of stroke by helping prevent blood clots from forming. However, these medicines may also increase your risk of bleeding. Most patients with AFib should be on one of these medicines. The medicine that is best for you will depend on your risk of stroke.

Medicines to decrease your risk of stroke - continued

Antiplatelets

Antiplatelets are generally used for patients with a low risk of stroke. Common types of antiplatelets include:

- Aspirin® (also called ASA, acetylsalicylic acid)
- Clopidogrel (also called Plavix®)

Do **not** combine antiplatelets with another blood thinner unless prescribed by your doctor.

Not all of these medicines may be right for you. Your doctor will discuss the benefits and risks of each of these medicines with you.

Anticoagulants

Anticoagulants are generally used for patients with a higher risk of stroke. Common types of anticoagulants include:

- Warfarin (also called Coumadin®)
- Dabigatran (also called Pradaxa®)
- Rivaroxaban (also called Xarelto®)
- Apixaban (also called Eliquis®)



Important information about your stroke prevention medicines

- Talk to your doctor or health care provider about your options.
- All of these medicines can increase the risk of bleeding. Signs of bleeding can include: nose bleeds, coughing blood, black stool, blood in urine, vaginal bleeding, etc.
- Make sure your health care provider knows all of the medicines you are taking, including non-prescription/over-the-counter medicines and natural supplements. Before taking any **new** medicines, speak with your health care provider.
- Take all of your medicines exactly as prescribed.
- More information about your medicines will be available from your pharmacist.