

# Introduction to Atrial Fibrillation (AFib)

## Learn About:

1. What is atrial fibrillation?
2. How will I feel?
3. Who gets AFib?
4. Risk of stroke
5. AFib treatment
6. How to live well with AFib

## 1. What is atrial fibrillation?

Atrial fibrillation is pronounced A•tre•al fi•bril•LA•shun, also known as AFib.

AFib is the most common type of heartbeat (otherwise known as heart rhythm) disorder. It makes your heartbeat irregular or uneven. When you have an episode of AFib, your heartbeat is often faster than usual. AFib can come and go, or it can also last for a long time. This uneven heartbeat can cause blood to pool in the heart and form a clot.

## 2. How will I feel?

Many people do not even realize that they have AFib because they do not feel any symptoms. In fact, AFib rarely requires urgent medical care. Most people with AFib continue to live healthy, active lives.

Some people may have symptoms. **The most common feeling is your heart jumping or racing (often called palpitations).** This is also described as a fluttering in your chest or skipped beats. These sensations are caused by a rapid or irregular heartbeat.

These are the other common symptoms you may feel. They spell out **A-F-I-B**:

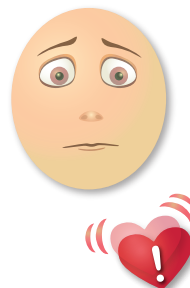
**Anxious**  
(feeling shaky,  
sweaty or dizzy)



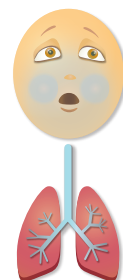
**Fatigue**  
(feeling tired,  
weak or faint)



**Irregular heart beat**  
(heart racing or  
palpitations)



**Breathing problems**  
(feeling short  
of breath)



### 3. Who gets AFib?

AFib is more common in people who have:

- high blood pressure
- had a previous heart attack
- an abnormal heart valve
- heart failure
- an overactive thyroid gland
- certain lung problems

### 4. Risk of stroke

AFib increases your risk of stroke since it can cause blood clots to form. The uneven heartbeat causes blood to pool in the heart. If these blood clots break loose they can travel to the brain and cause a stroke. Fortunately, strokes are fairly rare. It is important for your health care provider to assess your personal risk of stroke. The good news is that medicines can lower the risk of stroke.

### 5. AFib treatment

There are a variety of medicines and treatments for AFib:

- Medicines can be given to slow your heart rate (rate control) or help your heart return to a normal rhythm (rhythm control).
- Medicines can also be given to prevent blood clots from forming and reduce the risk of a stroke.
- Electrical cardioversion is a brief, carefully monitored electrical 'shock' to the heart that can also help return your heart to a normal rhythm.

### 6. How to live well with AFib

- Take your medication exactly as directed.
- If you have high blood pressure, ensure that it is under good control.
- If you feel sleepy during the day, fall asleep when you don't intend to and snore loudly and frequently, get checked for sleep apnea. If sleep apnea is detected and treated, this could improve your quality of life.
- Exercise for 30 minutes per day.
- Learn more about AFib and it's management — knowledge is power. Please refer to our other educational materials and online resources at [www.afbinnovationprogram.com](http://www.afbinnovationprogram.com)