

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

Atrial fibrillation is an irregular beating of the heart that starts in the atria (the upper two chambers of the heart). The atria beat in a disorganized and chaotic manner and not well coordinated with the ventricles (the main pumping chambers of the heart). The irregular rhythm is most often fast, but may be normal or slow. The causes of atrial fibrillation include reactions to medications, high blood pressure, heart attack, hyperthyroidism, coronary artery disease, heart valve disease, and heart failure. The longer the irregular rhythm is not treated, the more difficult it is to treat. A person may not even know that they have an irregular heart beat until a doctor diagnoses it. Atrial fibrillation can be serious since it decreases efficient filling of the heart with blood. Blood clot formation is possible which increases the risk of stroke.

Symptoms may include:

- There may be no symptoms
- Weakness, dizziness
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain with increased activity
- Feeling of irregular or fast heartbeat or pulse
- Reduced exercise tolerance

What your doctor can do:

- Ask about your symptoms, your medical history, and what medications you use on a regular basis
- Order blood tests, an echocardiogram (non-invasive, painless test that uses sound waves to record heart valve activity) and an electrocardiogram (ECG - a noninvasive, painless test that records electrical activity of the heart).
- Medications for controlling the rhythm and medicine to thin the blood and prevent blood clots. Some medications will require you to have periodic blood tests done to check that you are getting the correct dose. It may take time to find the medication or combination of medications that work best for you.
- Sometimes medication cannot help. In these cases, a controlled electric shock may be given to attempt conversion to a regular rhythm.

What you can do:

- Take medications as prescribed by your doctor.
- Do not stop your medications without talking to your doctor first. Contact your doctor about any side effects.
- Keep follow-up appointments for lab tests and check-ups.

What you can expect:

- Atrial fibrillation can usually be controlled through treatment.
- Working closely with your doctor to determine the proper medications and doses is very important.
- Possible complications if uncontrolled include stroke or heart attack.

Contact your doctor if you have symptoms of atrial fibrillation. If you have any of the risk factors, such as another heart condition, it is important to keep a regular schedule of check-ups.

Arif Abdullah MD PA-Conroe

601 River Pointe Dr., Suite #105, Conroe, TX 77304
(936)539-5577

Page 2 of 2

Reviewed by e-MDs staff 12/2015

This material has been provided by your doctor as an educational tool and is not meant to take the place of professional care. Please consult your doctor for any questions, concerns or changes in your condition.

Copyright © 2001 AMT Solutions, Inc. All rights reserved.