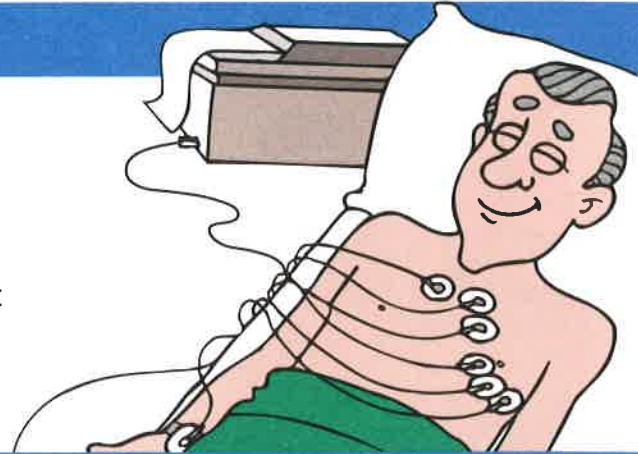


# Atrial Fibrillation (AF)

## Testing

AF is diagnosed with a test called an **electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG)**. An ECG does not hurt and lasts only a few minutes.

This test records your heart's rhythm so that your doctor can tell if your heart is beating too fast and/or unevenly.



## Treatment

There are many ways to treat AF. Your treatment may include:

- drugs** which may slow your heart rate and make your rhythm normal
- electrical cardioversion** to convert an abnormal heart rhythm to a normal rhythm
- catheter ablation** to stop the heart cells from causing the abnormal rhythm
- surgery** to implant a pacemaker

Always take your AF drugs as prescribed, even if you don't have any symptoms.



## Anti-clotting drugs

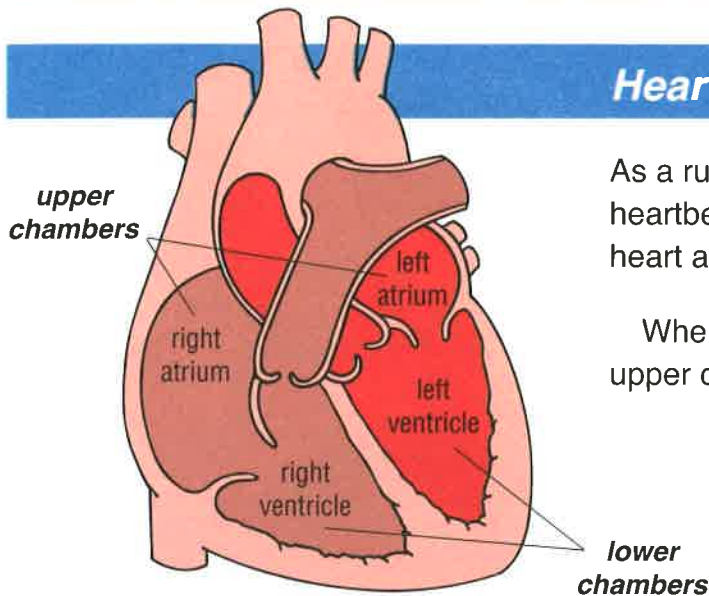
Your doctor may also tell you to take an anti-clotting drug such as **Warfarin (Coumadin®)**. This causes your blood to clot more slowly.

When you take an anti-clotting drug, you should:

- take it as prescribed, the same time each day
- have your prothrombin time (blood test) done when you are told to
- ask your doctor what to do if you forget to take a pill
- keep your eating habits about the same every day
- tell your doctor if you take any other drugs (even aspirin or vitamins)
- call your doctor if you are sick, get hurt or have a cut that won't stop bleeding
- tell any other doctor or dentist you see that you take this drug
- always wear identification (ID) that tells others you take anti-clotting medicines



# Atrial Fibrillation (AF)



## Heart rhythm and AF

As a rule, the heart has a regular rhythm (pattern of heartbeats). This rhythm helps pump blood through the heart and out to the body and lungs at a steady rate.

When you have **Atrial Fibrillation (AF)**, your heart's upper chambers beat too fast and not in a regular rhythm.

## What it means

When you have AF, the upper chambers of your heart don't pump blood into the lower chambers the way they should. The blood left in the upper chambers tends to pool and may form clots.

These clots can move to any part of your body. If a clot goes to your brain, it can block the flow of oxygen to part of your brain. When this happens, some of your brain cells may die. This is called a stroke.

Having AF makes you 5 times more likely to have a stroke.

## Risk Factors

You are at higher risk for AF if you:

- are over 65
- have heart disease
- have thyroid disease

## Symptoms

Some people with AF have no symptoms at all. Others may have these symptoms, which may begin and/or stop quickly:

- palpitations—fast, “fluttery” heartbeats
- shortness of breath
- a fast, uneven pulse
- chest pain or tightness
- fatigue or weakness
- confusion
- dizziness

**If you have any of these symptoms, call your doctor.**



Tell your doctor if your symptoms come back or if you have new problems such as ankle swelling, loss of appetite or sudden weight gain (3–5 lbs in 5 days).