Questions to Ask Your Doctor

- What is causing my AFib?
- What tests do I need?
- Will my AFib go away on its own?
- How can I reduce my risk of heart failure, blood clots and stroke?
- What are the treatment options available to me with the risks and benefits of each option?
- Do I need surgery or a medical procedure? If so, what are the chances of it resolving my AFib, and what are the risks?
- Are there medications available to treat my AFib, and what are their risks and benefits?
- What changes do I need to make to my diet, physical activity and lifestyle?
- What symptoms would mean I need to call my doctor? When should I call 911?

Contact Us

If you would like to receive support or need more information, please contact us at:

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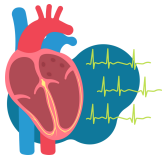
Understanding & Living with AFib

The Mended Hearts, Inc.

WOMENHEART

Discussion Guide for Patients & Caregivers

What is AFib?



Atrial fibrillation (AFib) is a serious and fairly common disease where the two upper chambers of the heart beat rapidly and irregularly. Your heart may feel fluttery or quivery. AFib affects the coordination of the heart beat between upper and lower heart chambers and can make it harder for the heart to pump. People who have AFib have a higher risk of blood clots, stroke and heart failure.

5X AFib increases your likelihood of stroke by five times.

AFib can come and go, lasting minutes to hours, or even days. This type of AFib is called **paroxysmal** AFib. If a single episode lasts longer than 7 days, it is called **persistent** AFib. Some people are in atrial fibrillation all the time, and that is called **chronic**, or **permanent** AFib. With any type of AFib, you should contact your doctor to talk about appropriate treatment as soon as possible.

What causes AFib?

AFib can be caused by changes or damage to your heart's electrical system or problems with your heart's structure. Risk factors for AFib include:

- Age
- High blood pressure
- Coronary artery disease (CAD)
- Heart failure
- Diabetes

12.1 million The approximate number of people in the U.S. who will have AFib by 2030.

- Valve disease
- Sleep apnea
- Chronic kidney disease
- Hyperthyroidism
- Obesity
- Smoking
- Alcohol use
- European ancestry
- A family history of AFib

Treatment of AFib

Treatment will depend on what factors are contributing to your AFib and how severe it is. Treatment may include:

- Anticoagulants—medications to thin the blood and help prevent blood clots and stroke
- Medications to control your heart rate
- Medication to control your risk of AFib (ex. blood pressure medication)
- Lifestyle changes to reduce risks
- Medical procedures or surgery

Some common procedures or surgeries for AFib include:

- An ablation procedure
- Electric cardioversion
- Left atrial appendage closure
- The MAZE procedure
- Inserting a pacemaker for slow heart rate from medication

Because women live longer than men and AFib increases with age, more women have AFib than men.

Preventing AFib

Not all AFib can be prevented, but you can do things to lower your chances of getting AFib or worsening it. They are:

- Eat a heart healthy diet
- Get regular aerobic exercise
- Stop smoking if you smoke
- Limit the amount of alcohol you drink

Signs & Symptoms

Many people with AFib will have no symptoms. However, you may have:

- A fluttery feeling in your chest
- Extreme fatigue
- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain

Women's symptoms can differ from men's—they are more likely to have fatigue and weakness.

If you have AFib, you should also know the signs and symptoms of heart attack, stroke and cardiac arrest and call 911 right away if you have any of those symptoms.

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