AFIB TREATMENTS TO HELP YOU PREVENT STROKE

COMMON MEDICATIONS

A goal for treating Afib may be to restore the normal, regular rhythm of the heart to help prevent a stroke. Often, this can be done with medications or the use of electrical stimulation (a procedure called "cardioversion"). Afib treatment may also concentrate on protecting against blood clots that travel from the heart to the brain and cause strokes.

Blood-thinning medications known as anticoagulants can greatly reduce stroke risk if taken properly. They work by preventing blood clots from forming and can reduce the risk of first stroke in Afib patients by 60 to 80 percent.

While most Afib-related strokes can be prevented with anticoagulants, it is estimated that more than half of Afib patients may not be prescribed these medications. There are several reasons why these medications are not prescribed, including:

- Interactions with other drugs and diet (e.g., foods such as green leafy vegetables containing vitamin K);
- The necessity for frequent blood tests and monitoring; and
- Concerns about risk of bleeding.

Talk with your healthcare professional about what medications may be right for you and your Afib.

Talk to your healthcare professional about whether anticoagulants are right for you.

MEDICATIONS—RISKS AND REWARDS

There are several clot-preventing medications available, including aspirin, warfarin sodium and new drugs called direct thrombin inhibitors or anti-Xa inhibitors. People who take warfarin must be regularly monitored with a blood test called the international normalized ratio (INR).

- If the INR is too low, blood clots may not be prevented and the risk of stroke is increased.
- If the INR is too high, there may be an increased risk of bleeding.

The newer anticoagulants (Pradaxa® [dabigatran] and Xarelto® [rivaroxaban]) do not require routine blood testing. These drugs generally do not have dietary restrictions, but are not for all people with Afib.

Medications that prevent blood clots are recommended when the benefit is greater than the risk. Your healthcare professional will help you weigh the pros and cons of taking an anticoagulant and decide which one to take. Make the decision together.

Learn the warning signs of a stroke. You, your family and your friends should be able to recognize the signs of a stroke, as described on the following pages.

YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

As a person diagnosed with Afib, you may feel overwhelmed, anxious and afraid. It is normal to have feelings of worry or fear. Fortunately, there are things you can do to help:

- Talk with your healthcare professional—this is part of your complete care.
- Schedule relaxation time—pleasant activities may help you feel like your normal self.
- Exercise, if approved by your healthcare professional, may help you maintain a positive, upbeat mood.

COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Talking with your loved ones about Afib may be difficult. However, there are some important things that you and your loved ones should all have access to, for both your safety and peace of mind:

- Medication list (all medications and doses)
- List of healthcare professionals (names, phone numbers, office locations and specialties)
- Healthcare appointment schedule. Also, it is important that you ask for help when needed. Here are a few questions you can ask your loved ones to get the discussion going:
  - I'm feeling overwhelmed—can you help me talk through my concerns?
  - Can you help me make follow-up appointments with my healthcare professionals?
  - Can you come with me to my follow-up appointments? It will help me remember what was discussed.

Source: National Stroke Association
www.stroke.org/afib-stroke

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MY MEDICATIONS

Medication Name	Dosage

MY HEALTHCARE TEAM

Name	Phone Number

Questions for my next visit

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