

Atrial Fibrillation

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Introduction

Atrial fibrillation is an irregular and often rapid heart rate that can increase your risk of strokes, heart failure and other heart-related complications. Symptoms often include heart palpitations, shortness of breath and weakness. Blood clots forming in the heart may circulate to other organs and lead to blocked blood flow (ischemia). Treatment may include medications and other interventions to try to alter the heart's electrical system. The heart's two upper chambers (the atria) beat chaotically and irregularly. Some people with atrial fibrillation have no symptoms and are unaware of their condition until it's discovered during a physical examination. Symptoms may include: Palpitations, a flip-flopping in your chest or a reduced ability to exercise. Atrial fibrillation is continuous and lasts longer than 12 months. With this type of heart rhythm, your heart rhythm doesn't go back to normal on its own. It may have symptoms that come and go, usually lasting for a few minutes to hours. Atrial fibrillation is an irregular and often rapid heart rate that occurs when the two upper chambers of your heart experience chaotic electrical signals. The result is a fast and irregular heart rhythm that may range from 100 to 175 beats a minute. The normal heart rate for a heart rate is 60 to 100 beats per minute. Abnormalities or damage to the heart's structure are the most common cause of atrial fibrillation. Possible causes of atrial fibrillation include High blood pressure. An overactive thyroid gland or other metabolic imbalance. Exposure to stimulants, such as medications, caffeine, tobacco or alcohol. Sick sinus syndrome-improper functioning of the heart's natural pacemaker. Atrial flutter is similar to atrial fibrillation, but the rhythm in your atria is more

organized and less chaotic. The risk factors for and the symptoms and causes are similar to those of atrial fibrillation. Atrial flutter is usually not life-threatening when it's properly treated. Strokes may also be a concern in someone with atrial flutter, but strokes are also a concern for those with atrial flutter as well. People with chronic conditions such as thyroid problems, sleep apnea, metabolic syndrome, diabetes, chronic kidney disease or lung disease are at higher risk.

Conclusion

In atrial fibrillation, the chaotic rhythm may cause blood to pool in your heart's upper chambers (atria) and form clots. If a blood clot forms, it could dislodge from your heart and travel to your brain, causing a stroke. Certain medications, such as blood thinners, can greatly lower your risk of a stroke or the damage to other organs caused by blood clots, and other factors. Heart failure, especially if not controlled, may weaken the heart and lead to heart failure.

To prevent atrial fibrillation, it's important to live a heart-healthy lifestyle to reduce your risk of heart disease. A healthy lifestyle may include: eating a healthy diet, increasing physical activity and avoiding smoking. Reducing stress, as intense stress and anger can cause heart rhythm problems. Avoiding caffeine and alcohol may help reduce the risk of a rapid heartbeat. Use over-the-counter medications with caution, as some cold and cough medications contain stimulants that may trigger a rapid heart rate.

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