Atrial Fibrillation and Stroke Prevention

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a condition where the heartbeat is irregular and often very fast. Untreated, AF is a major risk factor for stroke. Stroke is one of the leading causes of death and disability worldwide. Most strokes, including those caused by AF can be prevented.

Symptoms
Most people with AF don’t have any symptoms

- General fatigue
- Rapid and/or irregular heartbeat
- Fluttering or “thumping” in the chest
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Shortness of breath and anxiety
- Weakness
- Faintness or confusion
- Fatigue when exercising

Diagnosing AF

- **Pulse check**
  If your pulse rate is consistently lower than 60 or higher than 100 speak to your doctor.

- **Blood test**
  Some AF is caused by another health condition, a blood test will check for this.

- **ECG**
  Monitors your heart rate and rhythm.

- **Echocardiogram**
  Ultrasound imaging of your heart to identify any defects.
AF Treatment

Your doctor can prescribe medication to:

1. Address any underlying health condition causing AF
2. Control your heart rate
3. Restore your heart rhythm
4. Prevent blood clots

Anticoagulants stop blood from clotting. There are several different types of anticoagulants that your doctor may prescribe. Newer drugs have fewer side effects, cause fewer problems when taken alongside other medications and might be better at reducing your stroke risk.

Preventing AF and Stroke

We can all take steps to reduce our risk of AF. Action can also help you to avoid some other risk factors for stroke and heart disease.

- Manage your weight
- Reduce the fat in your diet
- Reduce alcohol consumption
- Avoid stimulants

This information was developed by:

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