

Living With Atrial Fibrillation: Your Daily Guide

Medical-Surgical · Cardiovascular

Atrial fibrillation, or AF, is an uneven heartbeat that sometimes beats too fast. Blood clots from the heart cause strokes, so your medicines matter.

Take your medicines

- Your blood thinner helps prevent clots and stroke.
- Other heart medicines control the speed or pattern of your heartbeat.
- Take each as directed, even when your heartbeat feels normal.
- Ask before adding medicines or supplements.

Check your pulse

- Rest first. Put two fingers on the thumb side of your other wrist.
- Count beats for 1 full minute. Write down the number and symptoms.
- Your care team's pulse limits: _____.
- Call if you cannot count it or it stays outside your limits.

Limit things that trigger symptoms

- Avoid or reduce alcohol. Avoid energy drinks and excess caffeine.
- Cut back on caffeine if it brings on symptoms.
- Ask before taking cold medicines for a stuffy nose.

Care for your sleep and heart

- Report loud snoring or pauses in breathing during sleep.
- Use your prescribed sleep-breathing treatment.

- Stop smoking. Follow your activity and blood pressure plans.

Remember BE FAST

- **B, Balance:** sudden loss of balance.
- **E, Eyes:** sudden vision loss or change.
- **F, Face:** one side droops.
- **A, Arms:** one arm becomes weak.
- **S, Speech:** speech becomes slurred or strange.
- **T, Time:** call 911. Note when symptoms began.

Call your provider today if you have

- A new racing heartbeat without emergency symptoms
- Mild dizziness or more trouble breathing during usual activity
- New bruising or repeated small bleeds

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have

- Any sudden BE FAST sign, even if it goes away
- Chest pain, fainting, or severe trouble breathing
- A racing heartbeat with severe dizziness
- Heavy bleeding or a sudden severe headache

This handout supports, not replaces, advice from your own nurse or doctor.

Online: nclexpace.com/patient-education/atrial-fibrillation-living-with/patient

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