

# Living with Atrial Fibrillation

## What is AFib?

AFib is a quivering or irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia) that can lead to blood clots, stroke, heart failure and other heart-related complications.

## What are the symptoms of AFib?



Fluttering or palpitations



Rapid and irregular heartbeat



Shortness of breath



Dizziness or lightheadedness



Chest pain



Fatigue

*Some people have no noticeable symptoms.*



People with untreated AFib are at **5 times greater risk for stroke.**



### Get regular checkups.

If you think you may have AFib, talk to your doctor. The longer AFib goes untreated, the more difficult it is to restore a normal heart rhythm.

## How is AFib treated?

### Medications

Doctors may prescribe anticoagulants, or "blood thinners," such as aspirin or warfarin to reduce the risk of blood clots that can lead to a stroke. Newer anticoagulants include rivaroxaban, apixaban and dabigatran.

Other medications may be prescribed to control heart rate and rhythm.

### Procedures

Several medical procedures are available to control or stop the electrical impulses that cause AFib.

- Cardioversion uses an electrical current to shock the heart back into a normal rhythm.
- AV node ablation uses heat to burn the pathway between the heart's top and bottom chambers. A pacemaker is then implanted to control the heartbeat.
- PVI ablation uses a catheter tip to destroy the heart tissue that is producing the abnormal rhythm.
- Open-heart maze procedure involves a surgeon making small cuts in the upper part of the heart and then stitching them together to form scar tissue. The scars stop the electrical impulses that may cause AFib.



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[American Heart Association – Atrial Fibrillation Medications](#)  
[American Heart Association Circulation](#)  
[American Heart Association – Non-Surgical Procedures for Atrial Fibrillation \(AFib or AF\)](#)  
[American Heart Association – Surgical Procedures for Atrial Fibrillation \(AFib or AF\)](#)  
[American Heart Association – Why Atrial Fibrillation \(AF or AFib\) Matters](#)  
[Mayo Clinic – AV Node Ablation](#)  
[Mayo Clinic – Pulmonary Vein Isolation](#)

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