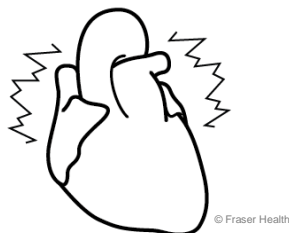


Atrial Fibrillation: What to do for my health

Atrial Fibrillation (or A-Fib) is a common heart rhythm problem. The electrical signals that control the heartbeat become irregular and cause the upper part of the heart to quiver (or fibrillate). When this happens, the heart can't pump very well.



It is not life threatening, but needs treatment to prevent complications. When blood is not flowing properly through the heart, it can clot. If a clot travels to the brain, it can cause a stroke.

Common Treatment

- **Heart Medications** control the speed or rhythm of the heartbeat.
- **Blood Thinners** taken every day to prevent clots. Some people need regular blood tests to check their blood clotting. The doctor or pharmacist checks the results and tells the person if they need to adjust the dose.
- **Pacemaker** is implanted in the body to control the heartbeat with electrical signals. Used along with medications.
- **Cardioversion or Ablation** uses a mild electrical current or a temperature change to scar or destroy the heart cells allowing the incorrect electrical signals.

I am the expert in my own unique experience with atrial fibrillation.

I am the most important person in managing my atrial fibrillation.

Watch for Signs of Atrial Fibrillation

- I know what to watch for and I know not everyone feels these signs:
 - feeling dizzy, lightheaded, or weak
 - pain, pressure or discomfort in the chest
 - shortness of breath
 - a pounding, fluttering, or racing heartbeat
- I know to keep track of when I notice any signs of atrial fibrillation and note what I was doing at the time.

Watch for Signs of a Stroke: Think FAST

- I know atrial fibrillation increases my chances of a stroke.
- I know to watch for these signs and act FAST:
 - **F**ace: Is it drooping?
 - **A**rms: Can you raise both?
 - **S**peech: Is it slurred or jumbled?
 - **T**ime to call 9-1-1 right away.



Be Active and Eat Well

- I know what to do to keep active. I know exercising and eating healthy is important to my long term health.
- I have received some guidance about how to return to exercise/sexual activity.



Take My Medications

- I know about my medications to thin my blood and prevent clots from forming.
- I know if I need regular blood tests to check my blood clotting.
- I will fill my prescriptions and ask my pharmacist to review how to take them.
- I will check with my doctor or pharmacist before stopping any medications.



Quit Smoking

- If I smoke, I realize the best thing I can do for my health is to stop.
- If I want help to quit, I can visit www.quit.now.ca or call 1-877-455-2233.



Get regular health checks

- I will see my family doctor one (1) week after going home. I will tell my nurse if I don't have a family doctor.
- I will talk to my doctor about my health and follow up care, including if I need blood tests.
- I will ask if I should see a cardiologist.
- I will ask about going to a Cardiac Clinic for my atrial fibrillation.
- I know it is okay to ask for help and support if I feel anxious or depressed for long periods of time.

Resources for Atrial Fibrillation

Fraser Health Cardiac Services

- Cardiac Check-In Program
- Atrial Fibrillation Clinics
 - Royal Columbian Hospital
 - Abbotsford Regional Hospital
 - Jim Pattison Outpatient Care and Surgery Centre

Programs need a doctor's referral.

Fraser Health Supported Programs

- Get up and Go Classes (small fee, 65+ yrs.)
Offered at local community centres
604-587-7866
- Smoking Cessation Clinic
Offered at Ridge Meadows Hospital
604- 463-1820

Web and Community Resources

- www.HealthLinkBC.ca 8-1-1
Information online or speak to a registered nurse, pharmacist, or dietitian anytime of the day or night.
- Nicotine Replacement Therapy 8-1-1
Free nicotine patches, lozenges, inhaler, or gum available to any B.C. resident.
- Chronic Disease Self-Management
www.selfmanagement.ca 604-940-1273
Supported by University of Victoria 1-866-902-3767
- Heart and Stroke Foundation
www.heartandstroke.bc.ca 778-372-8000
- Institute for Health + Lung Health
heartandlung.ca
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