

A-FIB

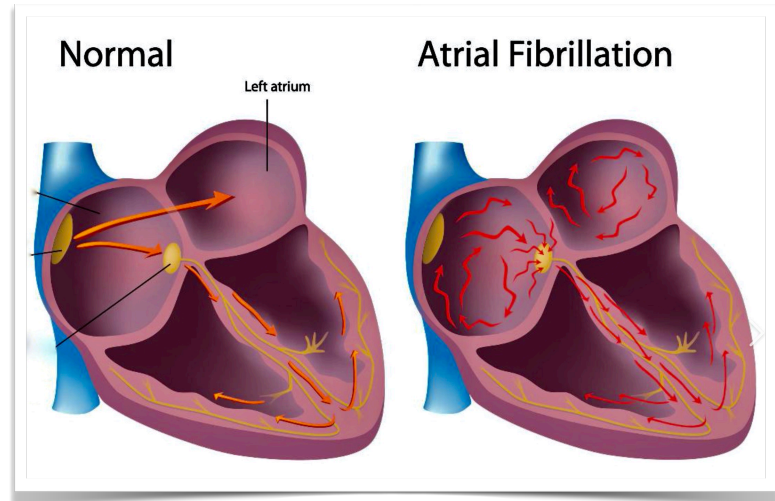
Atrial fibrillation, also called A-Fib or AF

Basics

- The most frequently encountered arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat)
- Risk factors: Blood flow stress, inflammation, drugs, alcohol, some medications, advanced age, neurologic, respiratory and endocrine disorders
- AF is responsible for 20-30% of all strokes. Even relatively short AF episodes (5-6 mins) are associated with an increased risk of stroke. AF is also associated with heart failure, cognitive impairment and dementia, myocardial infarction, chronic kidney disease, and sudden cardiac death.

Symptoms

- Rapid, irregular heartbeat (palpitations), fluttering (thumping) in the chest, chest pain/pressure, shortness of breath, anxiety, weakness, fatigue, decreased exercise tolerance, dizziness, faintness, lightheadedness



Prevention strategies

- Weight loss. Obesity is a strong risk factor and may be causal for AF; obesity is associated with incident AF and persistence.
- Incorporate at least 150 min/wk of moderate-intensity regular aerobic exercise which improves heart health.
- Address any sleep disorders. There is a high prevalence of sleep disordered breathing in AF patients.
- Incorporate diet rich in magnesium, potassium, and omega-3 fatty acids known to have heart-protective benefits. These includes citrus fruit, bananas, avocados, sweet potato, nuts and seeds, beans and peas, lentils, and marine fish.
- Recognize stroke warning signs, such as face drooping, arm weakness, or speech difficulty. Attention to risk factors may facilitate prevention and risk reduction.