



Women Living with Atrial Fibrillation (AFib)



Get the Care You Need

If you've been living with atrial fibrillation (AFib) for a while, you may know that it can cause a stroke or other serious problems. That's especially true if you don't get the treatment you need.

The good news is that you can take steps to advocate for yourself and make sure you're getting the treatment you need to be as healthy as possible.

Advocate for Yourself

Learn about your treatment options. You can manage AFib with lifestyle changes and different types of medicines — like beta blockers to slow your heartbeat and blood thinners to prevent clots from forming and lower your risk of stroke. Treatment for AFib can also include medical devices and procedures. For example:

- **Cardioversion** — which shocks the heart back to a normal heartbeat
- **Catheter ablation** — which blocks the electric signals causing your irregular heartbeat

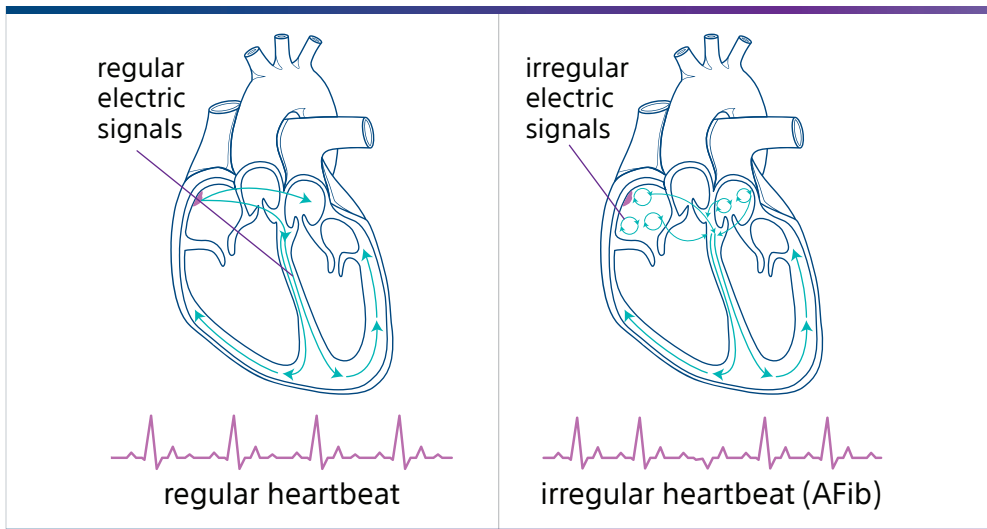
If you have a high risk of bleeding caused by blood thinners, **talk to your doctor about a procedure called a left atrial appendage closure.** This procedure closes off an area of the heart to help keep clots from forming, which lowers your risk of stroke and makes it possible for you to stop taking blood thinners.



Women and AFib

Women with AFib are more likely to have a stroke than men with AFib.¹ But women with AFib are less likely to get appropriate care and treatment. This may be partly because women with AFib are less likely to get a referral to a cardiologist (a doctor who specializes in treating heart problems) than men with AFib.

¹jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?doi=10.1001/jamacardio.2016.1025



AFib is when your heartbeat is irregular (uneven) — and often faster than normal. As a result, blood doesn't flow well from the upper part of your heart to the lower part. This can cause blood to pool in the heart and form clots, raising your risk of a stroke.

Ask your doctor questions to help make sure you're getting the care you need. For example:

- Why do you recommend my current treatment plan?
- Are there other medicines, diets, or activities that might help me?
- Can you tell me about catheter ablation?
- Am I eligible for a clinical trial?

Keep up with your medical appointments. But keep in mind that you have the right to get care from a doctor you trust — someone who takes your symptoms seriously, listens to your opinions, and answers all of your questions.

If you're feeling unsure about your care, ask for a second opinion from another doctor.

Make your own health a priority. Women often serve in a caregiving role. But it's important to take care of yourself, too — for example, by calling your doctor if you have a new symptom or something doesn't feel right.

Bring a family member or friend with you to your medical appointments. They can offer emotional support, help you ask questions, and take notes.



Every minute counts if you're having a stroke! If you think you're having one, call 911 right away. Read about stroke symptoms: [cdc.gov/stroke/signs_symptoms.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/stroke/signs_symptoms.htm)