

## Atrial Fibrillation (AF)

### > WHAT IS ATRIAL FIBRILLATION?

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a heart condition in which the top chambers of your heart (the atria) beat fast and erratically.

In AF, your heart may not pump blood around the body as well as it should.

If left untreated, AF may lead to serious health complications, such as stroke and heart failure.

### > WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS OF AF

Some people experience palpitations, dizziness, tiredness, or shortness of breath. However, AF may cause no symptoms, which is why it is important to have your heart rate checked.

### > WHO DOES AF AFFECT?

AF affects men and women and can occur at any age. However, the risk of having AF increases as you get older.

### > TREATMENT FOR AF

The treatment for AF depends on your symptoms and your individual risk of complications.

If you have symptoms that are affecting your daily living, there are a number of treatment options.

### > CATHETER ABLATION

This procedure targets the areas of the heart that are triggering the abnormal beats to prevent AF from happening. Catheter ablation is a minimally invasive procedure, and the patient is able to walk out of hospital with few side effects after an overnight stay.

### > DRUG THERAPIES

Many people with AF will take medication to prevent blood clots forming (called anticoagulants). This reduces the likelihood of having a stroke.

Medication for rate control- symptoms of AF can be reduced by slowing the heart down.

Medication for rhythm control- medications can be given to try to get the heart to beat normally.

### > ELECTRICAL CARDIOVERSION

An electrical current is applied through gel pads on the chest to try to get the heart to beat normally.

### > LIFESTYLE MANAGEMENT

You can help to prevent AF or limit symptoms if you do have AF

- ✓ Avoid stimulants including energy drinks and limit caffeine
- ✓ Avoid or limit alcoholic drinks
- ✓ Stop Smoking
- ✓ Regular physical activity
- ✓ Aim for a healthy weight
- ✓ Reduce stress

Information and support -hearts4heart  
Hearts4heart is a peak health promotion charity that provides education and support to Australians living with heart disease.