



Atrial Fibrillation

Lesser-known triggers

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Atrial Fibrillation

- **An irregular, often rapid heart rate that commonly causes poor blood flow.**
- **Can increase the risk of stroke and heart disease if left untreated.**
- **Atrial Fibrillation is one of the many cardiac arrhythmias people may experience.**



Known Causes of Atrial Fibrillation

- High blood pressure
- Heart attacks
- Coronary artery disease
- Abnormal heart valves
- Congenital heart disease
- Lung disease
- Previous heart surgeries

Lesser-known Triggers of Atrial Fibrillation

► Fatigue

- Being exhausted activates the autonomic nervous system, which regulates the body processes such as breathing, blood pressure and heartbeat, throwing off the body's natural rhythms.
- What can be done?
 - Get rest before a difficult task.
 - Break the task up into small pieces.
 - Rest between tasks.
 - Undergo a sleep study to assess for sleep apnea.

Lesser-known Triggers of Atrial Fibrillation

► Dehydration

- Being dehydrated can throw off the body's balance of electrolytes, minerals such as sodium and potassium, which help conduct electrical signals of the heart.
- What can be done?
 - Drink plenty of water.
 - Drink water in between meals.
 - Drink low-level electrolytes when doing physically extreme activity.

Lesser-known Triggers of Atrial Fibrillation

➤ Hormone Fluctuations

- The body's hormones influence electrical properties of the heart and can affect arrhythmia.
- What can be done?
 - Become aware of what is happening when atrial fibrillation occurs.

➤ Caffeine

- Coffee, tea, other caffeinated drinks and supplements can stir the heart and provoke electrical heart misfires.
- What can be done?
 - Listen to your body, need to recognize own limits.

Lesser-known Triggers of Atrial Fibrillation

➤ Alcohol

- Alcohol creates changes in the heart muscle that may increase atrial fibrillation.
- What can be done?
 - Avoid alcohol.
 - Avoid binge drinking.
 - Understand own limits of alcohol intake.

➤ Exercise

- Some exercise can be a predominant trigger and will occur with extreme activity or exhausting circumstances such as exercising in the heat.
- What can be done?
 - Talk with a physician before starting an exercise program.
 - Exercise under supervised care.

Lesser-known Triggers of Atrial Fibrillation

► Over-the-Counter Medicine

- Over-the-counter medicine such as cold medication can have potential impact.
- Some decongestants are epinephrine-like stimulants, constrict blood vessels to relieve a stuffy nose, but can raise blood pressure and increase the risk of rhythm abnormalities.
- What can be done?
 - Ask your doctor about using antihistamines, that reduce inflammation without constricting blood vessels.

Lesser-known Triggers of Atrial Fibrillation

► Air Pollution

- Particles in smoke, smog or haze that are tiny enough to pass through the throat and nose and reach the lungs can also affect the heart.
- Even short-term exposure to this particulate matter has been associated with increased rates of heart attack and some forms of arrhythmia.
- Research finds that air pollution specifically triggers atrial fibrillation.
- What can be done?
 - On bad-air days spend less time outside.
 - Avoid road with heavy traffic.

Lesser-known Triggers of Atrial Fibrillation

➤ Medical Procedures

- Anesthesia is stressful to the body and can affect the sympathetic nervous system-affecting the heart rate.
- What can be done?
 - Provide a medication list to a physician before a procedure
 - Try to be well-rested before a procedure.



Lesser-known Triggers of Atrial Fibrillation

Atrial fibrillation triggers can differ from one person to another. Always speak with your physician about any abnormal signs and symptoms related to the heart. Your primary physician or cardiologist can monitor you, sort through potential triggers, place you on proper medication and reduce your risk for complications.