



# Heart arrhythmia

An arrhythmia (also called dysrhythmia) is an irregular or abnormal heartbeat. It happens when the electrical signals that coordinate the heart's beats don't work in the proper way. The faulty signaling causes the heart to beat too fast (tachycardia), too slow (bradycardia) or irregularly.

## Causes:

- Stress or anxiety
- Smoking
- Drinking too much caffeine
- Sleep deprivation or sleep apnea
- Thyroid gland abnormalities (hyper or hypothyroidism)
- High blood pressure
- Current heart attack or scarring from a previous heart attack
- Coronary artery disease
- Cardiomyopathy
- Diabetes
- Certain medications, including cold and allergy drugs bought without a prescription
- Drug abuse





- Inherited arrhythmias

## **Symptoms:**

An arrhythmia may be “silent” and not cause any symptoms. If symptoms occur, they may include:

- Palpitations
- Pounding in your chest.
- Dizziness or feeling lightheaded.
- Shortness of breath.
- Chest discomfort.
- Weakness or fatigue (feeling very tired).
- Weakening of the heart muscle

## **When to see the Doctor?**

If you feel like your heart is beating too fast or too slowly, or it's skipping a beat, make an appointment to see a doctor. Seek immediate medical help if you have shortness of breath, weakness, dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting or near fainting, and chest pain or discomfort. A doctor can find an irregular heartbeat during an examination by taking your pulse, listening to your heart or performing diagnostic tests

## **Risk factors:**

- Smoking
- Consuming too much caffeine. Some people are sensitive to caffeine and may notice more symptoms when using caffeinated





products (such as tea, coffee, colas and some over-the-counter medications).

- High blood pressure.
- Obesity
- Diabetes
- Sleep apnea
- If you notice that your irregular heart rhythm occurs more often with certain activities, you should avoid them.

## **Treatment:**

**Medication:** to stop or prevent an arrhythmia or control the rate of an arrhythmia

**Electrical cardioversion:** a treatment that uses electricity to shock the heart back into a normal rhythm while you are anaesthetized or sedated

**Catheter ablation:** under local or general anesthetic that carefully destroys the diseased tissue in your heart that causes the arrhythmia

**Pacemaker:** a small device containing its own battery that is implanted in your chest under local anesthetic; it produces electrical signals to do the work of the natural pacemaker in your heart to help it beat at a normal rate

**Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD):** a device similar to a pacemaker that monitors your heart rhythm and shocks your heart back into a normal rhythm whenever this is needed

## **Prevention:**

- Don't smoke, reduce stress, and drink coffee and alcohol in moderation, or not at all.
- Follow a healthy diet and exercise regularly.
- See your doctor for a comprehensive medical examination

