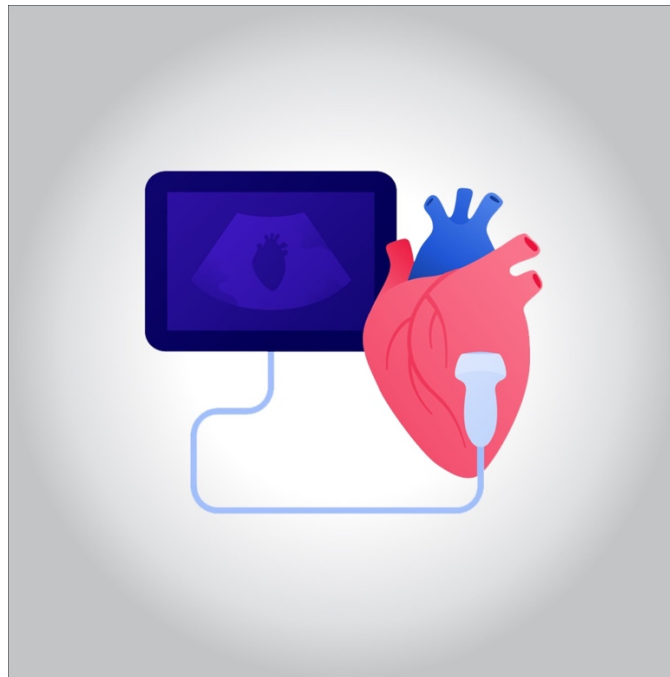


HEART ARRHYTHMIAS



Heart rhythm problems (heart arrhythmias) occur when the electrical impulses that coordinate your heartbeats don't work properly, causing your heart to beat too fast, too slow or irregularly.

Heart arrhythmias may feel like a fluttering or racing heart and may be harmless. However, some heart arrhythmias may cause bothersome — sometimes even life-threatening — signs and symptoms.

Heart arrhythmia treatment can often control or eliminate fast, slow or irregular heartbeats. In addition, because troublesome heart arrhythmias are often made worse — or are even caused — by a weak or damaged heart, you may be able to reduce your arrhythmia risk by adopting a heart-healthy lifestyle.

What are the symptoms?

- **A fluttering in your chest**
- **A racing heartbeat (tachycardia)**
- **A slow heartbeat (bradycardia)**
- **Chest pain**
- **Shortness of breath**
- **Anxiety**
- **Fatigue**

- **Lightheadedness or dizziness**
- **Sweating**
- **Fainting or near fainting**

What are the causes?

Certain conditions can lead to, or cause, an arrhythmia, including:

- **A heart attack that's occurring right now**
- **Scarring of heart tissue from a prior heart attack**
- **Changes to your heart's structure, such as from cardiomyopathy**
- **Blocked arteries in your heart (coronary artery disease)**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Overactive thyroid gland (hyperthyroidism)**
- **Underactive thyroid gland (hypothyroidism)**
- **Diabetes**
- **Sleep apnea**

Other things that can cause an arrhythmia include:

- **Smoking**
- **Drinking too much alcohol or caffeine**
- **Drug abuse**
- **Stress or anxiety**
- **Certain medications and supplements, including over-the-counter cold and allergy drugs and nutritional supplements**
- **Genetics**

Risk factors

- **Coronary artery disease, other heart problems and previous heart surgery**
- **High blood pressure**
- **Congenital heart disease**
- **Thyroid problems**
- **Diabetes**
- **Obstructive sleep apnea**
- **Electrolyte imbalance**

Prevention

- **Eating a heart-healthy diet**
- **Staying physically active and keeping a healthy weight**
- **Avoiding smoking**
- **Limiting or avoiding caffeine and alcohol**
- **Reducing stress, as intense stress and anger can cause heart rhythm problems**
- **Using over-the-counter medications with caution, as some cold and cough medications contain stimulants that may trigger a rapid heartbeat**

Treating fast heartbeats

- **Vagal maneuvers.**
- **Medications.**
- **Cardioversion.**
- **Catheter ablation.**