

What Does Your Heart Have to do With Stroke?

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

What is atrial fibrillation?

Atrial fibrillation (A-fib) is when the two upper chambers (atria) of the heart beat very fast and irregularly, instead of beating in rhythm with the lower chambers (ventricles). The atria may beat so fast they don't have time to empty completely. When the blood is left in the atria for too long it can form clots. When these clots are pumped out of the heart they can travel to the brain and cause a stroke.

How do you get it?

Atrial Fibrillation can happen at any time, but is more common as you age. A-fib may happen without any symptoms at all or you may feel like your heart is fluttering, or feel out of breath.

How is it treated?

Treating A-fib is important to prevent stroke. A-fib can be treated in many ways from lifestyle changes such as quitting smoking or limiting caffeine to medications, ablation, or surgery.

Preventing blood from clotting can be done by using an anticoagulant or an antiplatelet medication. These medications thin the blood making it harder to form clots. Aspirin is the most common antiplatelet drug used for people at low risk for stroke.

