



YOUR INFORMATION

Arrhythmia

ARRYTHMIA

Your diagnosis

You have been given a diagnosis of heart failure, which usually means your heart is working inefficiently. This inefficiency is usually due to two main causes: firstly, the incapacity of the heart to pump correctly and secondly, its inability to relax sufficiently to fill up with blood. There is generally an underlying problem which has caused this inefficiency. Occasionally, we don't know the exact cause of why your heart is working inefficiently (clinicians call this idiopathic). The question most patients want answering is "WHY is my heart not working efficiently; what has gone wrong?"

We believe that the cause of your heart failure is due to an **arrhythmia problem with your heart**.

What is Arrhythmia?

To enable your heart to beat, electrical impulses travel through the heart via what is sometimes referred to as a conduction pathway (think of a circuit board). Arrhythmias are disorders of the heart's electrical system, which means there is a change in the regular beat of your heart. This may be due to damage or a blockage in the system or an extra pathway that has been developed.

You may have a heart that is beating too quickly; this is called a tachyarrhythmia.

If your heart is beating too slowly, this is called a bradarrhythmia.

The heart may even beat irregularly.

The heart may beat fast or slow and irregular; this is called atrial fibrillation.

Problems with the conduction pathway of the heart affecting the bottom chambers or ventricles can be very concerning or even life threatening. These are called ventricular arrhythmias.

As a result of an arrhythmia, the heart's ability to pump can be affected. This is called heart failure.

Ask your healthcare professional:

What is the arrhythmia that is causing my heart failure?

How do you know that this is the reason why my heart is failing to do its job efficiently?

A number of tests and investigations will have been conducted. A history of your symptoms will have been taken, various blood tests, and a scan of your heart called an echocardiogram (echo). You will have had tracings of your heart taken (ECGs). This may have been done in hospital or over a number of days and that's when you will have had a remote recorder fitted that you were able to go home with.

What is the treatment I will receive for the underlying cause of my heart failure?

You will receive medication helping your heart to pump more efficiently. Your cardiology team will also look to see if you require medication to treat your arrhythmia, either by suppressing the harmful arrhythmia in order to maintain a normal heart rhythm or by the insertion of a cardiac device.

There are various types of cardiac devices. Please turn to the guide to understand the types and functions of the various devices available, especially if this is an option that your team is suggesting may benefit you.



Contact Pumping Marvellous



0800 9 788133



@pumpinghearts



www.pumpingmarvellous.org



heartfailureaware (open)



hearts@pumpingmarvellous.org



helpforhearts (closed support group)

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