



# Heart Care

## Atrial Fibrillation Treatment Program

### What Is Atrial Fibrillation?

Atrial fibrillation is the most common arrhythmia, or irregular heart rhythm, worldwide. It affects more than 2.3 million people in the United States alone, and this number is expected to grow as our population ages. Atrial fibrillation is a major cause of disability among Americans.

Atrial fibrillation results from abnormal electrical function in your heart's upper chambers. Instead of contracting or squeezing normally, these chambers fibrillate or "quiver," causing fast, irregular heart rates, and poor pumping of blood.

People with atrial fibrillation may have severe symptoms and may also develop serious complications, including stroke, heart failure (decreased pumping function of the heart) and death.

### What Causes Atrial Fibrillation?

Although atrial fibrillation may run in your family, in most cases diseases of the heart and blood vessels such as hypertension (high blood pressure), coronary artery disease (blockages in the blood vessels of the heart) and heart failure are thought to lead to its development.

### Atrial Fibrillation Symptoms

The symptoms of atrial fibrillation are different for each person. You may experience few, if any, symptoms. However, if you have symptoms they may affect your quality of life. Symptoms vary by age, how fast your heart beats, and the presence of other medical conditions.

In addition, people with abnormal heart valves, lung disease, including sleep apnea, thyroid disease, and/or diabetes, may develop atrial fibrillation. Sometimes, healthy people can develop atrial fibrillation from increased use of alcohol or caffeine, stress, fatigue and exercise.



For information about our treatment program, call [508-334-3452](tel:508-334-3452).

Symptoms of atrial fibrillation include:

- Heart palpitations (pounding in the chest)
- Irregular pulse or heart rate
- Weakness
- Lightheadedness
- Confusion
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain or pressure
- Fatigue
- Decreased energy level or level of activity
- Passing out/fainting

## How Is Atrial Fibrillation Treated?

Treatment of atrial fibrillation focuses on reducing your symptoms and preventing complications. Medications are often used to control heart rate and prevent blood clots and stroke. Sometimes electrical cardioversion (shock therapy) and special medications called anti-arrhythmics are used to restore and maintain a normal heart rhythm. Exciting new atrial fibrillation treatment options including ablation therapies (nonsurgical procedures) are available through programs like the Atrial Fibrillation Treatment Program at UMass Memorial Medical Center.

## About Our Atrial Fibrillation Treatment Program

The goal of our atrial fibrillation team is to improve your health by reducing symptoms, preventing complications, improving quality of life and preventing long-term illness. Our experts use the latest technology and work with you to develop a treatment plan that may include the following:

- Advanced arrhythmia monitoring
- Anti-arrhythmic medications
- Anticoagulant medications, known as blood thinners (managed by our award-winning Anticoagulation Clinic nurses, technicians and physicians)
- Electrical cardioversion or shock therapy
- Catheter-based, nonsurgical ablation procedures
- Surgical atrial fibrillation ablation procedures (including minimally invasive procedures)



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