

# Living With Atrial Fibrillation

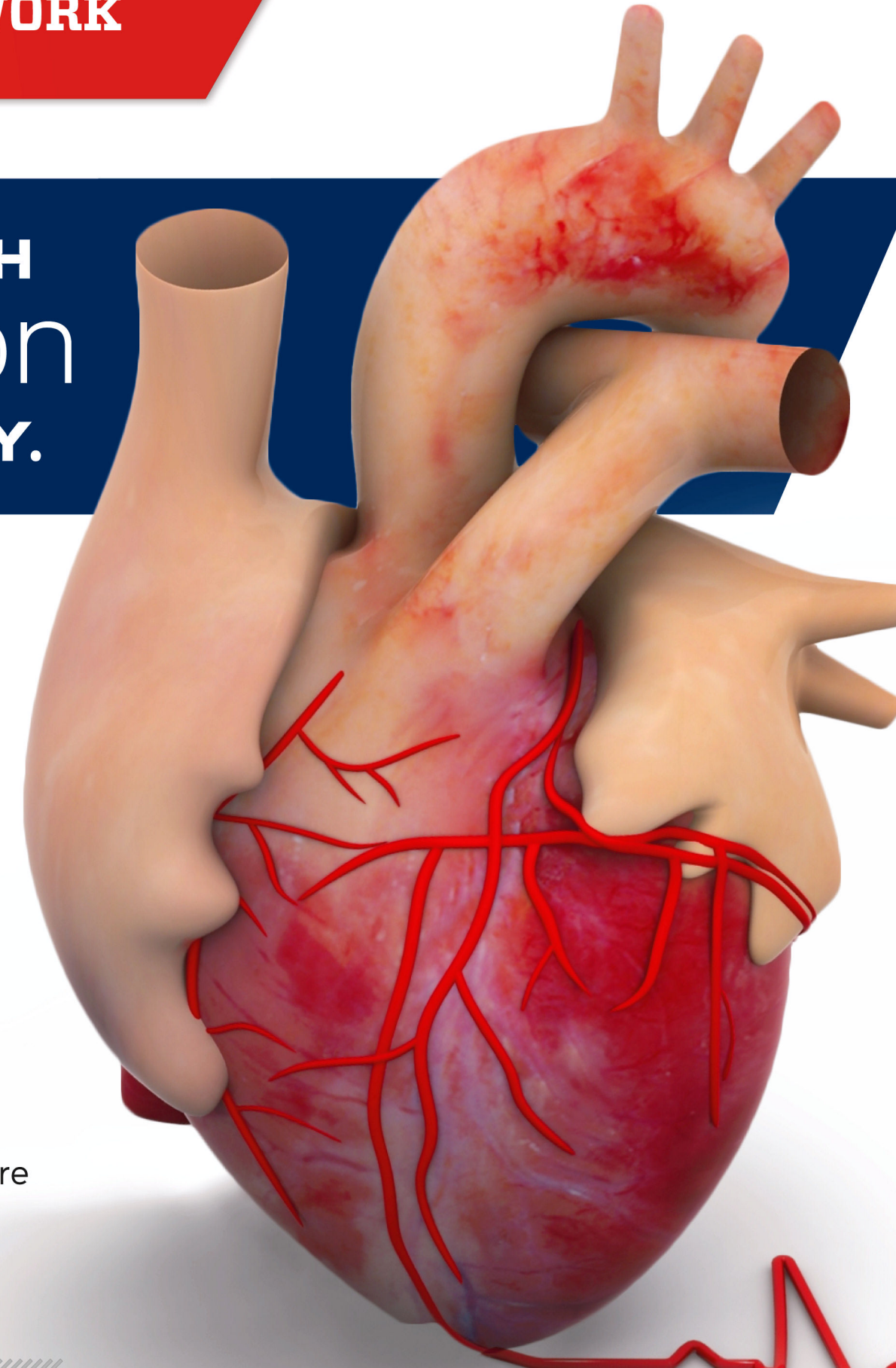
## BEING DIAGNOSED WITH Atrial Fibrillation OR AFIB, CAN BE SCARY.

But learning about AFib and how to take care of yourself can help you feel more in control.

### WHEN YOU HAVE AFIB, YOUR HEART BEATS TOO QUICKLY, TOO SLOWLY, OR IRREGULARLY.

This may happen once in a while or all the time. An irregular heartbeat, or arrhythmia, can prevent blood from flowing through your heart as well as it should.

**5x** People with AFib have a five times higher risk of stroke than those without it, because the irregular beating of your heart can cause blood clots to form and travel to your brain, where they can cause a stroke.



### AFIB SYMPTOMS

Although some people with AFib have no symptoms at all, many feel one or more of a range of symptoms, including a fluttering or thumping in their chest, chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, confusion, sweating, fatigue, or anxiety.

Pay attention to what might be triggering your symptoms.

For some people it's:

> stress

> anxiety

> poor sleep

> unusual levels of exertion.

For others it may be:

> caffeine

> cigarette smoking

> alcohol

> medicines that contain stimulants.

Avoiding your triggers may help reduce your symptoms.

**IF YOU DO HAVE A STROKE**, getting quick medical care can help improve your chances of surviving. Be sure your family and friends know about the **FAST method of spotting and responding to the signs of stroke**:

> **F is for face:** Numbness or drooping on one side of the face, or a crooked or lopsided smile.

> **A is for arm:** Weakness or numbness in one arm, or the inability to raise both arms evenly.

> **S is for speech:** Slurred speech, trouble speaking, or an inability to repeat a simple sentence.

> **T is for time:** If any signs of stroke—face, arm, or speech—are present, someone should call 911 right away. **DON'T WAIT: EVERY SECOND COUNTS.**

Although AFib does raise stroke risk, many people who have it can live long, active, healthy lives after their diagnosis. By working with your doctor to get the medical care you need, and making lifestyle changes that will lower your stroke risk and improve your overall health, you can manage your AFib and have your best possible quality of life.

### AFIB TREATMENT

The good news for people with AFib is that there are ways to lower stroke risk. **Doctors can treat your AFib with:**

- > medication
- > implant
- > surgery

Lifestyle choices, such as changes in diet, fitness, and weight, can also help.

**Two main types of medication are used to treat AFib:** Those that control the heart's rate and rhythm, and blood thinners. Although blood thinners may help blood clots from forming, they also may have a risk of potential side effects, such as excessive bleeding and subdural hematoma, which is bleeding that occurs within the skull.



## LIFESTYLE CHANGES THAT Lower Stroke Risk

People with AFib have a five times higher risk of stroke than those without it. You can lower your risk of having a stroke by making these lifestyle changes:

### » Quit smoking

Smoking causes fatty deposits to build up in your arteries, which makes strokes more likely. And the chemicals in smoke damage your heart and blood vessels. Ask your doctor for help quitting, or visit [smokefree.gov](http://smokefree.gov).

### » Be active

Moderate exercise lowers the risk of stroke, heart attack, diabetes, high blood pressure, and becoming overweight. Try to walk briskly, jog, swim, cycle, or dance for 30 minutes a day, most days of the week. And add in extra steps throughout the day—take the stairs instead of the elevator, socialize with friends by going for a walk rather than a restaurant meal, and pace instead of sitting while talking on the phone.

### » Eat a healthy diet

A healthy diet can lower stroke risk, especially if it contains five or more daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Choose fresh produce, whole grains, lean poultry, fish, beans, nuts, and low-fat dairy foods. Limit red meat, sweets, sugary drinks, and saturated and trans fats.

### » Shake your salt habit

High-sodium diets can raise your blood pressure. Cut back on salty foods such as cold cuts and canned soups, and read labels to avoid hidden salt in salad dressings, breads, pasta sauces, frozen dinners, and other processed foods.

### » Lose weight

If you're overweight, dropping just 5 to 10 percent of your weight—as little as 10 pounds if you weigh 200—can lower your blood pressure and your stroke risk.

### » Limit alcohol

Have no more than two drinks a day if you're a man, and one drink daily if you're a woman.



## QUESTIONS

*to Ask Your Doctor*

If you've been diagnosed with atrial fibrillation, be sure to ask your doctor these important questions:

### » Q. What are my AFib treatment options?

Your doctor may recommend lifestyle changes, medications, implants, or surgery.

### » Q. What is my blood pressure?

People with AFib have an elevated risk of stroke, especially if their blood pressure is high.

### » Q. Should I take blood pressure medication?

Several classes of prescription medications can help manage blood pressure and lower stroke risk.

### » Q. Is my blood sugar normal?

Having high blood sugar is a sign of diabetes, and diabetes raises stroke risk. Starting at age 45, your blood sugar should be checked at least every three years.

### » Q. Do my cholesterol levels need checking?

Excess cholesterol in the arteries can block blood flow and raise stroke risk. Your HDL, LDL, total cholesterol, and triglycerides should be checked at least every four to six years.

#### IMPORTANT SAFETY INFORMATION

The WATCHMAN Device is a permanent implant designed to close the left atrial appendage in the heart in an effort to reduce the risk of stroke. With all medical procedures there are risks associated with the implant procedure and the use of the device. The risks include but are not limited to accidental heart puncture, air embolism, allergic reaction, anemia, anesthesia risks, arrhythmias, AV (Atrioventricular) block, bleeding or chest pain from the TEE (Trans Esophageal Echocardiogram) probe, blood clot or air bubbles in the lungs or other organs, bruising at the catheter insertion site, clot formation on the WATCHMAN™ Closure Device, cerebral bleed, excessive bleeding, gastrointestinal bleeding, groin puncture bleed, hypertension, infection/sepsis, pneumonia, pulmonary edema, pulmonary embolism, renal failure, stroke, syncope/dizziness and transient ischemic attack. In rare cases death can occur.

Be sure to talk with your doctor so that you thoroughly understand all of the risks and benefits associated with the implantation of the WATCHMAN Device. Reference: 1. Holmes DR, Jr, et al. Prospective randomized evaluation of the Watchman Left Atrial Appendage Closure device in patients with atrial fibrillation versus long-term warfarin therapy: the PRECISE trial. J Am Coll Cardiol. 2014;63(11):1112.

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**WATCHMAN**  
LEFT ATRIAL APPENDAGE CLOSURE IMPLANT

**QUESTIONS ABOUT THE HMN WALLBOARD PROGRAM?**  
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