

When should I seek medical help with atrial fibrillation?

Patient information: Cardiology Diagnostic and Interventional Services

What should I do when my heart rhythm goes into atrial fibrillation?

When your heart rhythm changes into atrial fibrillation it is normal to be aware of palpitations or an irregular 'fluttering' of the heart. Atrial fibrillation may also cause you to have feelings of fatigue, weakness or less able to exercise. If this has happened before, follow any instructions given to you by your GP or cardiologist.

Many episodes of atrial fibrillation will return to normal rhythm, though this may take up to 24 hours.

If you are not feeling unwell, it is safe to wait before seeking medical help.

When should I seek medical help with atrial fibrillation?

You should see your GP or go to an after-hours medical centre if your symptoms last for more than 24 hours, or sooner if you feel unwell. We advise that you get someone to drive you to the GP or medical centre.

If your atrial fibrillation stops within 24 hours, we suggest you ring your GP practice (during normal working hours) to let them know.

When should I seek urgent help with atrial fibrillation?

Call for help immediately if you have symptoms of:

- Fainting or loss of consciousness
- Chest pain or angina
- Chest tightness, pressure, heaviness, or pain in your chest, which may spread to your neck, jaw, shoulders, or arms
- Shortness of breath at rest
- Weakness, numbness or loss of movement of the face, arm, or leg. Speech that is slurred, jumbled, or lost. Any visual disturbances.

If you experience any of these symptoms you should phone 111 for an ambulance immediately

For more information about:

- your health and medication, go to www.healthinfo.org.nz
- hospital and specialist services, go to www.cdhb.health.nz