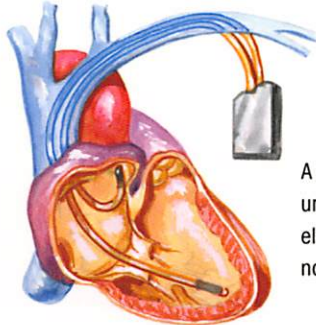
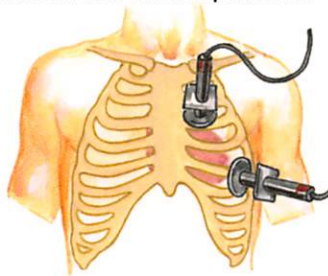


Complications include valve abnormalities and blood clots, which can travel to other areas in the body, such as the brain (to cause stroke).

Treatments include using cardioversion and a dual-chamber pacemaker.

In cardioversion, an electrical shock causes the abnormal heartbeat to go back to normal.



A dual-chamber pacemaker is placed under the skin of the chest and creates electrical pulses to keep the heart rate normal.

#### Ways to manage atrial fibrillation



Eat healthy.



Don't smoke.



Exercise.

Maintain a healthy weight.

#### FROM THE DESK OF

#### NOTES

#### How Is Atrial Fibrillation Treated?

Treatment focuses on the cause. For example, if the person has thyroid disease, that illness is treated. If the cause is too much caffeine or excess alcohol, less should be used.

Controlling heart rhythm and the fibrillation rate with drugs is important. Sometimes atrial fibrillation stops on its own.

Clots are one complication of fibrillation. Blood thinners (anticoagulants) such as warfarin (e.g., Coumadin) may be given for clots or to prevent them. This drug causes easy bruising or bleeding, so drug levels are checked regularly.

The abnormal rhythm can sometimes be shocked back to normal (called *cardioversion*). Chest pain, low blood pressure, CHF, or other serious symptoms may require emergency cardioversion. A dual chamber pacemaker may be placed. A heart catheter or surgery (maze procedure) may be used to destroy the part of the heart causing fibrillation.

#### DOs and DON'Ts in Managing Atrial Fibrillation:

- ✓ **DO** eat a heart-healthy diet (less fat and cholesterol).
- ✓ **DO** keep to an ideal body weight.
- ✓ **DO** reduce stress.
- ✓ **DO** exercise as much as you can if you are taking the proper drugs and have no symptoms.
- ✓ **DO** take your medicines as prescribed. Have blood drug levels checked.
- ✓ **DO** call your doctor if you have drug side effects or if you have new or worsening symptoms.
- ⊘ **DON'T** do activities that cause bruising if you are taking a blood thinner.
- ⊘ **DON'T** use tobacco.
- ⊘ **DON'T** drink too much alcohol or caffeine.

#### FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact the following sources:

- American Heart Association  
Tel: (800) 242-8721  
Web: [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)