

What is arrhythmia?



Dr Oliver Segal

Arrhythmia occurs when the heart's electrical signals become disrupted, causing it to beat too fast, too slow, or irregularly. This affects how well blood is pumped around the body and can therefore impact organ function.

What are the main types of arrhythmia?



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Atrial fibrillation

When upper chambers of the heart beat irregularly or too fast

Bradycardia

When the heart beats too slowly

Tachycardia

When the heart beats too fast

Others include extra beats or rare, dangerous rhythms like ventricular fibrillation.

What factors increase the risk of arrhythmia?



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Heart disease, high blood pressure, thyroid issues, high alcohol intake, excess caffeine, smoking, drugs, stress, certain medicines, age, and genetics.

What symptoms should you watch for?



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Palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath, chest pain, fatigue, or fainting episodes may signal arrhythmia. These should not be ignored, especially if persistent.

When should you see your GP?



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If symptoms happen regularly, get worse, or affect daily life, speak to your GP.

How are arrhythmias treated?



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Treatment depends on type and severity, but may include medicines to slow or regulate heartbeat, blood thinners to reduce stroke risk, and lifestyle changes like cutting out alcohol and caffeine, stopping smoking, and looking for ways to manage stress.

When is surgery considered?



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If prescribed medicines are deemed unsuitable or have been ineffective, surgical options could include a pacemaker, defibrillator or catheter ablation procedure.

When is arrhythmia an emergency?



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Call 999 if you experience severe chest pain, sudden collapse, severe breathlessness, signs of stroke, or palpitations with dizziness or fainting.

If you are concerned about your heart, you can see a consultant cardiologist at one of HCA UK's leading private hospitals within 24 hours.

Call our dedicated cardiac booking line on **0207 616 4988**.