

# TREATMENTS TO HELP REDUCE THE RISK OF AFIB-RELATED STROKE

## COMMON TREATMENTS

The goal for treating AFib may be to restore the normal, regular rhythm of the heart to help prevent a stroke. Often, this can be done with medications or the use of electrical stimulation (a procedure called “cardioversion”). AFib treatments may also concentrate on protecting against blood clots that travel from the heart to the brain and cause strokes.

Blood-thinning medications—known as anticoagulants—can greatly reduce stroke risk if taken properly. Anticoagulants work by blocking the production of Vitamin K, the vitamin that helps blood to clot, so that the risk of blood clots forming is reduced. While many AFib-related strokes can be prevented with anticoagulants, it is estimated that more than half of AFib patients may not be prescribed these medications. There are several reasons these medications are not prescribed, including:

- Interactions with other drugs and diet (e.g., foods such as green leafy vegetables containing vitamin K);
- The necessity for frequent blood tests and monitoring; and
- Concerns about the risk of bleeding.

**Talk with your healthcare professional about what medication may be right for you.**

## MEDICATIONS— RISKS AND BENEFITS

There are several blood-thinning medications available. People who take warfarin must be regularly monitored with a blood test called the International Normalized Ratio (INR).

- If the INR is too low, blood clots may not be prevented.
- If the INR is too high, there may be an increased risk of bleeding.

There are a number of new oral anticoagulants with different mechanisms of action than warfarin. Some for example, are direct thrombin inhibitors in the clotting system and others are factor Xa inhibitors. Reversal agents may be available for these newer agents.

Anticoagulants remain one of the best ways to prevent clotting and reduce the risk of stroke for people with AFib.

Your healthcare professional will help you weigh the pros and cons of taking an anticoagulant and decide which one to take. Make the decision together.

## YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH

As a person diagnosed with AFib, you may feel stressed or less focused on quality of life. It is normal to have feelings of worry or fear.

Fortunately, there are things you can do to help:

- Talk with your healthcare professional— This is part of your complete care.
- Schedule relaxation time—Pleasant activities may help you feel better.
- Exercise—Work with your doctor to come up with exercise plan, which may help you maintain a positive, upbeat mood.

**Learn the warning signs of a stroke. You and your family and your friends should be able to recognize the signs of a stroke, as described on the following pages.**

## COMMUNICATION WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS

Talking with loved ones about AFib may be difficult. However, there are some important things that you and your loved ones should all have access to, for both your safety and peace of mind:

- Medication list (all medications and doses)
- List of healthcare professionals (name, phone number, office locations and specialties)
- Healthcare appointments schedule

Also, it is important that you ask for help when needed. Here are a few questions you can ask your loved ones to get the discussion going:

- I'm feeling overwhelmed—can you help me talk through my concerns?
- Can you help me make follow-up appointments with my healthcare professionals?
- Can you come with me to my follow-up appointments? It will help me remember what was discussed.



Source: National Stroke Association  
[www.stroke.org/afib-stroke](http://www.stroke.org/afib-stroke)

## MY MEDICATIONS

Medication Name

Dosage

Medication Name	Dosage

## MY HEALTHCARE TEAM

Name

Phone Number

Name	Phone Number

Questions for my next visit

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