

Mayo Clinic Minute: Managing atrial fibrillation

VIDEO	AUDIO
	A normal heart rhythm should beat like a steady drum.
	----NATS OF HEARTBEAT--
	Atrial fibrillation is like a chaotic drumbeat.
<p>Christopher DeSimone, M.D., Ph.D. Cardiovascular Disease Mayo Clinic</p>	<p>"It's a bum, bum-bum, bum-bum-bum, bum-bum-bum-bum-bum. So, what you're having is you're having heartbeats that are going sooner or shorter — bum-bum — or longer — bum-bum-bum, bum. And what that's doing is, it's altering the ability of your heart to fill and your heart to pump blood effectively."</p>
	That can put patients at greater risk of blood clots, heart failure and stroke.
	<p>"The heart's like a house. You have the upstairs, you have the downstairs, and you have electricity going on at the top of the heart. And it's coordinated to beat and pump in a fashion so that blood gets to the rest of your body by going from the top, down through the middle of the heart, out to the bottom of the heart into the basement. The top chambers of the heart is where the problem lies for atrial fibrillation."</p>
	There are many causes, such as high blood pressure, diabetes or even sleep apnea.
	Often patients are unaware they have atrial fibrillation.
	<p>"Sometimes they'll describe to me they feel fatigued. They're more short of breath. They feel like they're getting older. They feel like they haven't been as active. But really what they're feeling is not effective blood pumping."</p>
	Treatment is individualized for each patient and may include medication; administering an electrical shock to the heart; or a procedure called catheter ablation, which scars the heart tissue that's creating

	the erratic signals.
	For the Mayo Clinic News Network, I'm Jason Howland.