

## Questions to Ask Your Doctor:

- What is Atrial Fibrillation (AF)?
- What are the symptoms of AF?
- What is Heart Failure?
- What are the symptoms of Heart Failure?
- What is the link between AF and Heart Failure?
- What are my treatment options?
- Which medication is right for me?
- Is there anything I can do to help myself?
- Will I need to have a procedure?
- How will having AF and heart failure impact on my daily activities?
- Do I need to change my diet?
- Can I exercise safely?
- Who do I contact for support, advice, or information about AF and heart failure?



If AF is left untreated you are **FIVE** times more likely to experience an AF-related stroke, or lead to Heart Failure.



If you have any questions, require support, advice, or additional information regarding patient resources and upcoming events, please contact our Patient Services Team:

Call:

**+44 (0)1789 867502**

Email:

**info@afa.org.uk**

or visit:

**www.afa.org.uk**

To view our patient resources, scan the QR code below:



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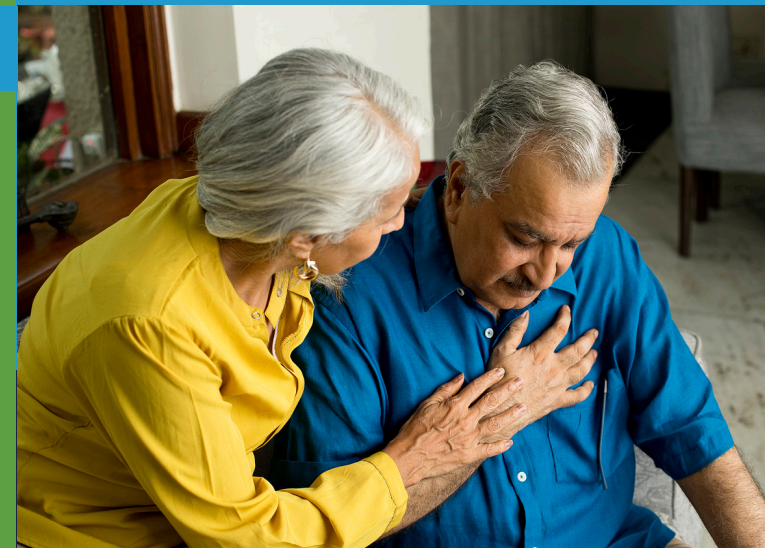
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FOR PATIENTS & CAREGIVERS

## Atrial Fibrillation (AF) & Heart Failure Discussion Guide

*This guide is to help your  
understanding of the link between  
AF and Heart Failure*





### What is Atrial Fibrillation?

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) is an irregular and often rapid heart rhythm (arrhythmia) that affects the upper chambers of the heart (atria). This can cause poor blood flow and increase the risk of stroke, heart failure, and other complications. AF is the most common arrhythmia worldwide, affecting approximately 37.5 million people globally. Its prevalence increases with age, affecting about 2% of people under 65 but rising to over 9% in those older than 80.

### What are the common symptoms of AF?

If you have AF or heart failure, it is important to monitor symptoms and seek medical advice if they worsen. Common symptoms include:

- Irregular or rapid pulse/heart rhythm
- Palpitations (fluttering/pounding in the chest)
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Fainting

### What is Heart Failure?

Heart failure occurs when the heart is unable to pump blood effectively, leading to symptoms such as fatigue, shortness of breath, and fluid retention. It can develop due to various conditions, including high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, and AF. Heart failure affects around 64 million people worldwide, with an estimated 1-2% prevalence in the general population, increasing to over 10% in individuals within the age group 70+.

### What are the common symptoms of heart failure?

- Shortness of breath, especially when lying down or with activity
- Swelling in the legs, ankles, or abdomen
- Fatigue and weakness
- Rapid or irregular heartbeat
- Persistent cough or wheezing

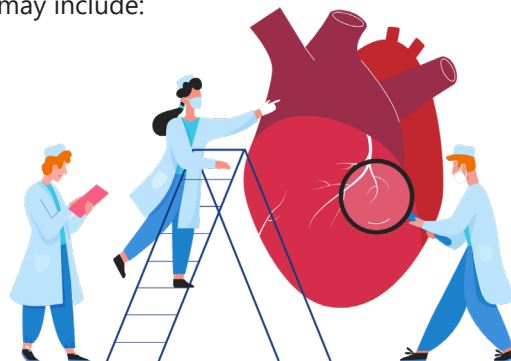
### What is the link between AF and Heart Failure?

AF and heart failure are closely linked. People with AF are at an increased risk of developing heart failure, and those with heart failure have a higher chance of experiencing AF. This can be due to the following:

- AF causes the heart to beat irregularly, making it harder to pump blood efficiently.
- The irregular heart rhythm can lead to a weakened heart over time.
- Heart failure can cause changes in the heart that trigger AF. Studies suggest that up to 50% of patients with heart failure will develop AF at some point, and individuals with AF have a three-fold increased risk of developing heart failure compared to those without AF.

### What are my treatment options?

Treatment options for managing AF and heart failure together requires a comprehensive treatment plan, which will be reviewed and discussed with your doctor, some of the options may include:



### Medications:

- **Anticoagulants** – Direct Oral Anticoagulants (DOACs), or Warfarin
- **Beta-blockers** or **rate-limiting calcium channel blockers** and/or digoxin to help control heart rate.

Other medication combinations for AF and heart failure will be discussed in detail with your specialist clinician.

### What can I do to help myself?

- Follow a heart-healthy diet (avoid high salt intake and processed foods).
- Maintain a sensible weight.
- Exercise regularly (Yoga, Pilates, swimming)
- Limit or eliminate stimulants (alcohol, caffeine, nicotine, energy drinks).
- Keep anxiety/stress levels to a minimum (mindfulness, relaxation techniques and CBT can all alleviate stress).

### Medical procedure:

In some cases, a procedure may be offered to help alleviate symptoms:

- Cardioversion
- Ablation
- Pacemaker or implantable device

### What happens next?

If you are concerned, contact your doctor for medical advice, early detection and treatment can significantly improve quality of life.