Arrhythmia
Also called: irregular heartbeat

Improper beating of the heart, whether irregular, too fast, or too slow.

**Very common**
More than 3 million US cases per year

- Requires a medical diagnosis
- Lab tests or imaging often required
- Treatable by a medical professional

Cardiac arrhythmia occurs when electrical impulses in the heart don’t work properly.

There may be no symptoms. Or, symptoms may include a fluttering in the chest, chest pain, fainting, or dizziness.

If needed, treatment includes anti-arrhythmic drugs, medical procedures, implantable devices, and surgery.

### Ages affected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Bar Length</th>
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<td>0-2</td>
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<td>3-5</td>
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<td>6-13</td>
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<td>41-60</td>
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<td>60+</td>
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### Symptoms

**Requires a medical diagnosis**

There may be no symptoms. Or, symptoms may include a fluttering in the chest, chest pain, fainting, or dizziness.

Can have no symptoms, but people may experience:

- **Pain areas**: in the chest
- **Whole body**: dizziness, fainting, or lightheadedness
- **Heart**: palpitations or slow heart rate
- **Also common**: shortness of breath

### Treatments

**Treatment varies**

If needed, treatment includes anti-arrhythmic drugs, medical procedures, implantable devices, and surgery.
Medications

**Antiarrhythmic agent:** Helps control abnormal or irregular heart rhythms.
- Lidocaine (Xylocaine)
- Digoxin (Lanoxin, Digox, Lanoxin Pediatric, and Digitek)
- Dofetilide (Tikosyn)
- Amiodarone (Nexterone and Pacerone)
- Flecainide
- Sotalol (Betapace, Sotylize, Sorine, Betapace AF, and Sotalol AF)
- Adenosine (Adenocard)

**Calcium channel blocker:** Relaxes blood vessels.
- Verapamil (Verelan, Calan, Verelan PM, and Calan SR)
- Diltiazem (Cardizem, Tiazac, Cartia XT, Taztia XT, and Matzim LA)

**Beta blocker:** Slows heart rate and decreases blood pressure. When taken in eye-drop form, it reduces eye pressure.
- Propranolol (Hemangeol, Inderal XL, InnoPran XL, and Inderal LA)
- Atenolol (Tenormin)
- Metoprolol (Lopressor and Toprol XL)

**Dietary supplement:** Works alone or in conjunction with other treatments to promote health.
- Potassium

Medical procedure

**Cardioversion:** Using electrical shocks to restore normal heart rhythm in people with irregular heartbeats.

**Radiofrequency ablation:** Removal of tissue using the heat from an electric current produced by a radio wave.

Devices

**Pacemaker:** A small device placed in the chest or abdomen that sends out electrical signals to keep the heart beating normally.

**Implantable cardioverter-defibrillator:** A small device placed in the chest or abdomen that shocks the heart if it develops a dangerously irregular heartbeat.

Supportive care

**Cardiac monitoring:** Using an electronic device to monitor heart rate and rhythm. Can be done in the hospital or at home.

Specialists

**Cardiologist:** Specializes in heart disorders.

**Primary care provider (PCP):** Prevents, diagnoses, and treats diseases.

**Emergency medicine doctor:** Treats patients in the emergency department.

Critical: consult a doctor for medical advice

Note: The information you see describes what usually happens with a medical condition, but doesn't apply to everyone. This information isn't medical advice, so make sure to contact a healthcare provider if you have a medical problem. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or an emergency number immediately.

**Sources:** Mayo Clinic and others. Learn more