

What is an **arrhythmia?**



London Bridge Hospital

What is an arrhythmia?

Arrhythmia is an umbrella term used to describe a number of conditions where the muscle contraction of the heart is too slow, too fast or irregular because of a disturbance with the heart's normal electrical activity.^{1,2}

What are the different types of arrhythmia?

- ♥ **Ectopic beats** are early beats that frequently cause palpitations and are described as missed or extra beats. Ectopic beats are not normally dangerous and don't damage the heart¹
- ♥ **Atrial fibrillation** is the most common, sustained, abnormal heart rhythm involving rapid and irregular activity in the heart.¹ Although it may affect young people, it typically affects patients of 65 and older
- ♥ **Atrial flutter** involves the top chambers of the heart (the atria) beating very rapidly, as electricity circulates around them and is commonly seen in middle aged and elderly patients¹
- ♥ **Atrial tachycardia** is a fairly uncommon arrhythmia that may result in rapid palpitations. It is often seen in patients with diseased hearts, although it may occur in patients with otherwise normal hearts¹
- ♥ **Ventricular tachycardia** is a fast rhythm that starts in the bottom chambers of the heart (the ventricles) and leads to the heart beating inefficiently. It is commonly seen in patients who have suffered a previous heart attack and in this setting may be life-threatening⁴

What are the causes?

Arrhythmias can be caused by an underlying condition such as heart disease, thyroid conditions or high blood pressure. Certain factors such as stress, smoking, excess alcohol, anger, caffeine and certain drugs can also trigger arrhythmias. Sometimes however, there is no known cause.⁵



What are the symptoms?

Symptoms of arrhythmias can range in severity from a minor inconvenience to a potentially fatal problem and include palpitations, feelings of a racing heart, shortness of breath, dizziness or faintness.¹

Who is affected?

Anyone can be affected by an arrhythmia at any age. An estimated 700,000 people in the UK have an arrhythmia.²

How are arrhythmias diagnosed?

There are several tests used to diagnose arrhythmias and the test used depends on both the type and severity of the symptoms and it is usually very important to try and document the rhythm at the time of the patient's symptoms.

- ♥ Initially, a prompt recording and archiving of a 12-lead electrocardiogram (ECG) is taken, even if symptoms have subsided, to monitor the heart rhythm for any patients with an arrhythmia or a suspected arrhythmia²
- ♥ A 24-hour (or longer) ECG monitors the heart rhythm and allows doctors to further analyse the electrical activity in the heart to determine the type of arrhythmia¹
- ♥ An ultrasound scan of the heart, called an echocardiogram, is often performed to check how the main pumping chamber is working and to look at the heart valves¹
- ♥ 24-hour blood pressure tests are used to monitor and assess blood pressure control¹
- ♥ Sometimes it is necessary to place wires in the heart through a vein in the leg to examine the electrical wiring of the heart. This often allows a precise diagnosis to be made. Often the abnormal heart rhythm discovered can be cured by a minor keyhole surgical procedure (ablation)
- ♥ More detailed investigations might include a coronary angiogram to look at the heart's blood supply¹
- ♥ In some instances, additional tests are carried out to determine which part of the heart is responsible for the abnormal rhythm¹

What type of doctor treats arrhythmias?

Doctors with expertise in diagnosing and treating arrhythmias are called 'electrophysiologists' and are highly skilled in diagnosing and assessing the best treatment option for patients with an arrhythmia.⁴

For more information on any of the above visit:
www.londonarrhythmiacentre.co.uk

The London Arrhythmia Centre



The London Arrhythmia Centre is based at the London Bridge Hospital and is the private hospital of choice for patients with heart complaints who need to be seen quickly and receive the best available service.

London Bridge Hospital has established an international reputation for offering the best in private healthcare and is committed to the very highest standards of clinical skills and nursing care.

The London Arrhythmia Centre, which is a Centre of Excellence, offers investigation and treatment for patients by a dedicated group of doctors, physiologists and allied medical staff as well as the latest technology.

It is home to the largest group of arrhythmia specialists in Europe who are dedicated and committed to clinical excellence and patient care.

The only UK specialist arrhythmia nurse, within the private sector, is also based at The London Arrhythmia Centre.

Treatments

Effective treatments are available for all types of arrhythmia at the London Arrhythmia Centre including:

- ♥ Catheter ablation
- ♥ Pacemakers
- ♥ Implantation of Cardioverter Defibrillators
- ♥ Cardioversion
- ♥ Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy
- ♥ The London Arrhythmia Centre specialise in the treatment of complex arrhythmias including atrial fibrillation and arrhythmias seen in adults with congenital heart disease

Infection Control

At the London Bridge Hospital, hospital acquired infections such as MRSA are kept at very low levels due to continuous vigilance, robust infection surveillance systems and ongoing training of staff at all levels in hospital hygiene. All patients admitted to London Bridge Hospital either as an inpatient or as a day case, are screened for MRSA.

References

1. London Bridge Hospital Website. Available at www.londonarrhythmiacentre.co.uk
2. Department of Health. National Services Framework for Coronary Heart Disease. Chapter Eight: Arrhythmias and Sudden Cardiac Death. March 2005
3. British Heart Foundation. Atrial Fibrillation Patient Booklet
4. Arrhythmia Alliance Website. Available at www.hearrhythmcharity.org.uk
5. National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute Website. Available at http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/dci/Diseases/arr/arr_causes.html

Meet the Team

The ten doctors who currently staff the centre have between them over 60 years of Consultant experience in arrhythmia care.



Dr Michael Cooklin



Dr Stuart Harris



Dr Mark Earley



Dr Martin David Lowe



Dr John Paul Michael Foran



Dr Francis David Murgatroyd



Dr Nick Gall



Dr Richard John Schilling



Dr Jaswinder Singh Gill



Dr Simon Sporton

GP Liaison Team

The London Bridge Hospital has a dedicated GP Liaison Team to assist with all appointment bookings to ensure patients have a seamless journey from referral through to after care.

For more information or to arrange an appointment, please call:

+44 (0)845 602 4255

The London Arrhythmia Centre
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www.londonbridgehospital.com

Email: arrhythmia@hcahealthcare.co.uk



Location Map



Directions

London Bridge Hospital is situated on the South Bank of the Thames. We are next to the London Bridge mainline and underground stations with easy access to the city.

Train

Trains connect directly with all stations on the Thameslink line.

Underground

London Bridge station is on the Jubilee Line and Northern Line.