

How does Atrial Fibrillation cause a stroke?

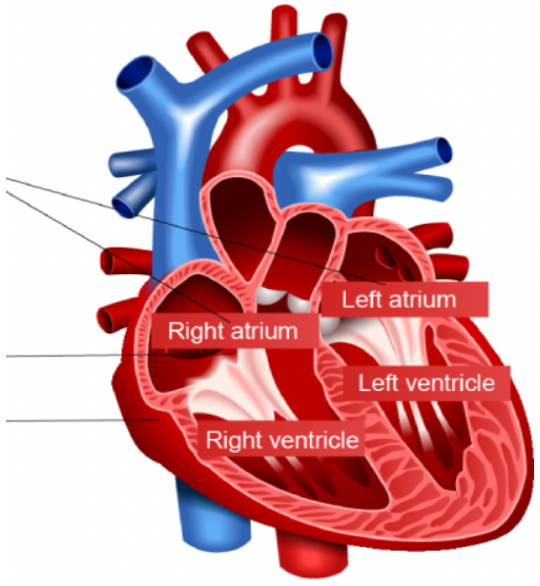
Generally a stroke is caused by a clot blocking the flow of blood to the brain or a blood vessel bursting and bleeding (less common) into the brain.

A stroke can be fatal or can affect your ability to walk, talk, see, read or do things you used to do.

In atrial fibrillation the electrical signals near the heart's pacemaker, the sinus node, becomes erratic causing the heart to beat out of rhythm and beat faster (the rate). It prevents the smaller atrial chambers from pumping properly resulting in the risk of blood clots. These clots may travel to the brain and cause a stroke.

Normal heart beat

- 1) The sinus node, the heart's natural pacemaker, triggers every heart beat by sending an electrical signal.
- 2) To both atria (top chambers of the heart). The Atria contracts and pumps blood into the ventricles (bottom chambers of the heart).
- 3) The atrioventricular node is the "gateway" between the atria and ventricles. It controls the flow of electrical signals to the ventricles and can slow down these electrical signals if necessary.
- 4) The two branches of the bundle of His (special heart muscle cells) help to conduct the electrical signals to the walls of the ventricles.
- 5) Ventricles contract.



When the heart beats in normal rhythm (know as "sinus rhythm") blood flows freely through its chambers.

People with atrial fibrillation are five times more likely than others to have a stroke. To help prevent a stroke from atrial fibrillation:

- get your heart rate and rhythm tested by a health professional at least yearly
- if you feel your heart is racing get it checked by a health professional
- don't smoke
- exercise regularly
- avoid sitting for long periods
- get enough sleep
- eat fresh foods
- reduce your alcohol intake

Atrial fibrillation can be treated with medication and with other procedures. Reduce your risk of a stroke and keep an eye on your heart.

If you need help changing your diet or getting into exercises our friendly therapist can help. Just contact Therapy Professionals, Phone: 377 5280, Mobile: 027 435 8970, Email: admin@tpl.nz