YOUR GUIDE TO CARE WITH RHYTHM CONTROL:

What is Rhythm Control?

UpBeat
By Heart Rhythm Society

WHAT IS RHYTHM CONTROL?

Rhythm control is a strategy (or pillar) for managing atrial fibrillation (AFib) that works by returning your heart to a normal rhythm and keeping it that way. Medications can be prescribed or administered by a provider on your care team. Procedures are generally done by a heart rhythm doctor, called an electrophysiologist (EP for short), at specialized facilities.

Three of the main treatments used in rhythm control are described below. These treatments can be done alone or in combination.

1

ANTIARRHYTHMIC MEDICATION

Antiarrhythmic medications are drugs that can be used to return your heart to normal rhythm or be used on a daily basis to maintain normal rhythm. They can either be taken by mouth or given through an IV. These types of drugs may be prescribed for:

- **Patients with rare episodes of AFib, to be taken when their heart goes into AFib to get it back into normal rhythm**
- **Patients with frequent episodes of AFib, to be taken every day to help maintain normal rhythm**

Talk to your care team about the type of antiarrhythmic medication that may be right for your type of AFib.

2

ELECTRICAL CARDIOVERSION PROCEDURE

In an electrical cardioversion procedure, quick low-energy electrical shocks help reset your heart to a normal rhythm. This procedure is done in the hospital or emergency room, and has a few steps:

- **Patients are given a drug, called a sedative, to make them fall asleep**
- **Electrical pads are placed on the patient's chest**
- **The patient's blood pressure and oxygen are monitored**
- **A carefully timed and monitored electric shock is delivered to restore normal rhythm**

3

CATHETER ABLATION PROCEDURE

A catheter ablation is a procedure that typically uses small amounts of cold or heat energy to block the electrical signals that cause irregular heartbeats. This procedure is usually done when antiarrhythmic drugs or cardioversion are not working but may be the first treatment for some patients. This procedure is usually done in the hospital by an EP, and has a few steps:

- **Patients are given anesthesia during the procedure**
- **Thin, flexible tubes, called catheters, are inserted through the blood vessels to the heart**
- **Cold or heat energy is used to create tiny scars on the heart which block the electrical signals that cause AFib**

Copyright 2023 Heart Rhythm Society