

**HAVE  
AFIB?**



**If You Are Having Heart Surgery,  
Surgical Ablation at the Same  
Time Might Be Right for You**

**ACT**  
  
against Afib

# Do You Have Afib? Having Heart Surgery?

Your doctor believes the best treatment for your heart condition is surgery. This brochure may help to answer some of your questions. It may also suggest topics you want to discuss with the surgeon before your surgery — such as whether the surgeon can treat your atrial fibrillation (Afib) at the same time!

## Types of Open-Heart Surgery:

- **Coronary Artery Bypass Graft** (CABG)
- **Mitral Valve Replacement** (MVR)
- **Aortic Valve Replacement** (AVR)
- **Surgical Ablation** (SA)

## If You Have Afib, You Have:

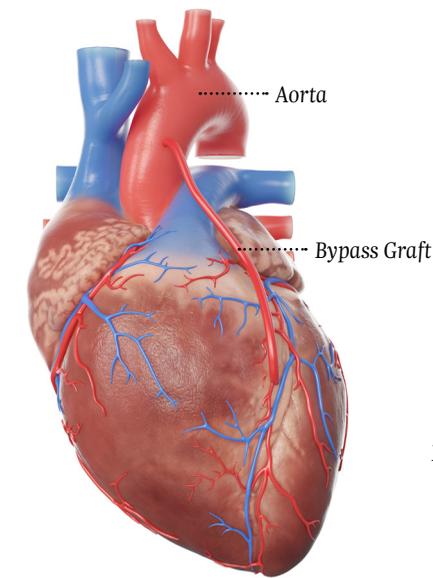
**5x** increase in stroke risk<sup>1</sup>

**5x** increase in heart failure (HF) development<sup>2</sup>

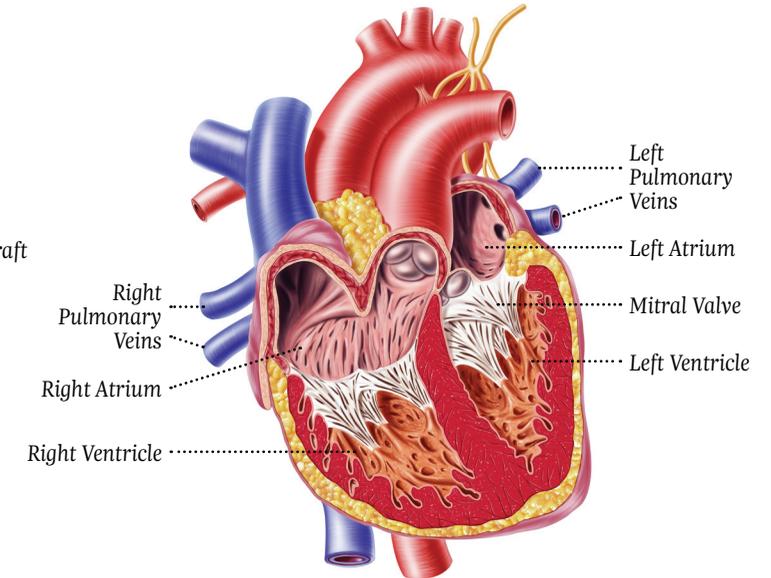
## How Does Surgery Treat Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)?

Your upcoming heart surgery will treat your coronary artery disease (CAD). CAD occurs when the arteries that send blood to your heart muscle become blocked. This happens as plaque builds up inside the arteries. Plaque is made up of fatty substances, such as cholesterol, in your blood. Because of the plaque, less blood can flow through your arteries, and the heart muscle cannot get all of the blood and oxygen it needs. The major symptoms of CAD are usually chest pain (angina) or shortness of breath.<sup>3</sup> For some people, the first signs of CAD are chest pain or a heart attack.

During CABG the surgeon removes a healthy section of artery or vein from another part of the body (often the leg or the chest wall). The healthy artery or vein is then connected to the heart artery. In this way, the blood “bypasses” the blocked segment. This allows enough blood to flow to your heart muscle. If several arteries are blocked, a person may have a bypass graft for each blocked artery.



View of Outside of Heart



View of Inside of Heart

# What is Afib?

**Atrial fibrillation is an abnormal and irregular heartbeat, or heart rhythm.** It occurs in the heart's upper chambers, the atria. Atrial fibrillation is caused by erratic electrical signals in the heart. You might also hear atrial fibrillation called AF, or Afib.

## Symptoms of Afib:<sup>4</sup>

- Shortness of breath
- Feeling lightheaded
- Heart palpitations (a feeling that the heart is racing)
- Fatigue
- Chest pain
- Lowered blood pressure
- Weakness

## Is Afib **Always** Detected **Before** Heart Surgery?

**No. Not always.** Before you have heart surgery, it's very important to mention to your surgeon if you have Afib, or symptoms of Afib.

**Ask your surgeon about ablation to treat your Afib.**

## Are There **Health Risks** for Someone with Afib?

**Yes.** Afib can weaken the heart. Afib can also cause problems with the way the heart contracts to send blood to the entire body.

### Medical issues people with Afib might face:

- **Stroke**<sup>1</sup>
- **Chronic Fatigue**<sup>5</sup>
- **Heart Failure**<sup>2</sup>
- **Shortness of Breath**<sup>5</sup>

## It's Also Important to Tell the Surgeon If You Have:

- Had heart palpitations
- Taken blood thinners
- Taken medication for your heart
- An irregular heart rhythm

# Afib Can **Negatively** Affect How a Person Feels in Other Ways, Too.



**Medications:** People with Afib often need to take medications to slow the heart rate and/or control the heart rhythm. Blood thinners are often used to prevent clots, and thus prevent stroke. These medications may have the following side effects:<sup>6,7</sup>

- Excessive bleeding
- Weakness
- Reddish-colored skin
- Dizziness
- Bleeding in the brain
- Nausea or vomiting
- Blurred vision
- Seizures
- Diarrhea
- Confusion
- Fatigue
- Blood in stool or urine
- Bleeding in the stomach or intestines
- Swelling in the abdomen, ankles, or feet
- Dry mouth, eyes, and skin



**Quality of Life:** A person's quality of life can decline due to:<sup>8</sup>

- Symptoms of Afib
- Anxiety
- Side effects of medication
- Depression
- Stress over medications
- Frequent clinic and doctor visits<sup>9</sup>



**Decreased Activity:** The symptoms of Afib can cause a person to become less physically active. This may also lead to fewer social activities with friends and family.<sup>8</sup>

# What Are the Treatments for Afib?

**Lifestyle Changes:** Eating right and exercising more may not be able to cure Afib. But, they can prevent or help limit health conditions — such as obesity or diabetes — that may cause Afib.<sup>10</sup> They can also help you feel better overall.

**Medications:** If you have Afib, many medications are not usually able to stop the Afib. They often treat symptoms like fast heart rate or blood thinners to prevent clots that can cause strokes. Only a few medications may be used to try to halt the Afib.

**Electrical Cardioversion:** This same-day procedure restores a normal heart rhythm. Electrodes (small sticky patches) are attached to the outside of the chest. Wires connect the electrodes to a machine that delivers energy. The procedure is often done by a cardiologist called an electrophysiologist.



**Medications do not necessarily help people with Afib live longer.<sup>11</sup>**

# Ablation Treatment Options for Afib

**Ablation:** An ablation delivers small, painless amounts of energy directly onto the heart tissue to cause lesions. The purpose of the lesions is to interrupt the abnormal electrical signals and stop the Afib. There are different types of ablation described here.

**Catheter Ablation:** Catheter ablation treats Afib from the inside of the heart. Doctors place a catheter, a long thin tube, in a vein in the upper thigh or groin area and up into the heart. The person is awake during the procedure but receives medication to feel drowsy.

The procedure often takes 2 to 4 hours. The patient might go home the same day or might need to stay overnight in the hospital.<sup>12</sup> Some people may have a repeat procedure if the Afib comes back.

**Surgical Ablation:** Surgical ablation, which treats the outside tissues of the heart, is performed through an incision in the chest. If you are having CABG or valve surgery, surgical ablation can be done at the same time.

Some aspects of surgical ablation are similar to catheter ablation:

- Energy is delivered to the heart to interrupt the abnormal electrical signals.
- The resulting lesions are intended stop the Afib.

The hospital stay after surgery and ablation is usually less than a week.<sup>13,14</sup>

**Hybrid Ablation:** For patients with long-standing persistent Afib that are not having heart surgery, there is now hybrid ablation, or a combination of surgical ablation with catheter ablation. The surgical ablation is performed through a smaller incision in the chest than heart surgery. The person gets anesthesia to be fully asleep during this procedure. The hospital stay will be typically 2-3 days.

# Why is Surgical Ablation of Your Afib So Important?

If you have Afib and are going to have surgery, your two heart issues can be corrected during one surgery.

1. Medical societies recommend it.<sup>20-24</sup>
2. It can help stop the Afib and reduce burden on the heart, yet only about 20–30% of people who have Afib before their surgery get surgical ablation.<sup>16,25,26</sup>
3. Surgical ablation has the highest chance to restore a normal heart rhythm. **Research has shown it can help people with Afib to live longer.**<sup>15-17</sup>

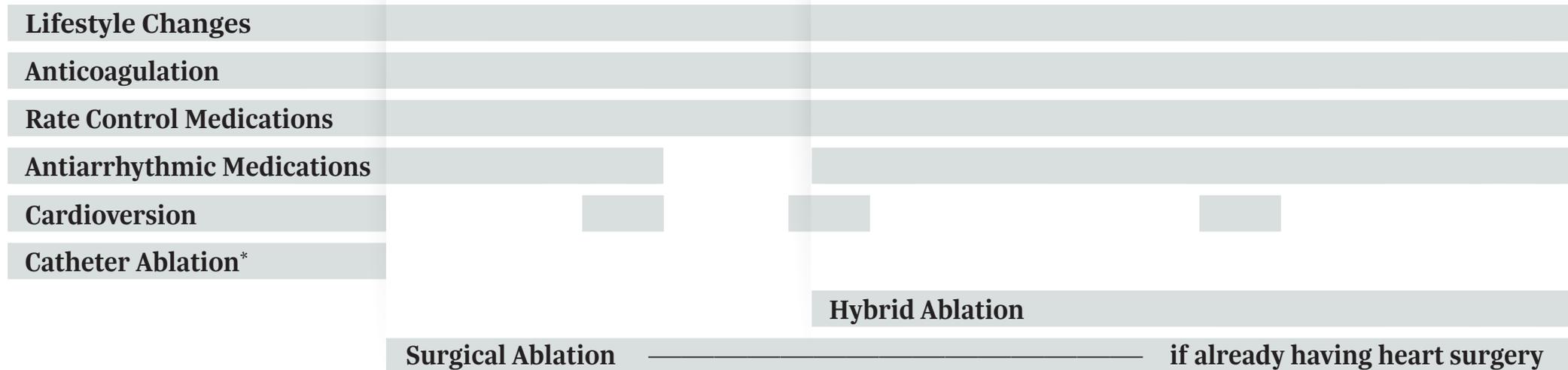
## Stages of Afib and Common Treatments

### Types of Afib



### Diagnosis

### Possible Treatments for Afib



Source: Developed with the special contribution of the European Heart Rhythm Association (EHRA), Endorsed by the European Association for Cardio Thoracic Surgery (EACTS), Authors/Task Force Members, Camm, A.J., et al. (2010). Guidelines for the management of atrial fibrillation: the Task Force for the Management of Atrial Fibrillation of the European Society of Cardiology (ESC). European Heart Journal, 31(19):2369-429.

\*Some catheters may have received an early persistent indication, defined as Afib less than 6 months, for use during catheter ablation.

# Is Ablation Right for Me?

**Have Afib? Having Heart Surgery?  
Ask Your Surgeon if Surgical Ablation is Right For You.**

## Ablation for Afib May Help:\*

- You live longer and feel better
- You stay out of the hospital (readmissions lower)
- Your heart pumps more strongly (EF improves)
- You walk faster and feel better
- You get off coumadin and bleed less

\*Source: Marrouche, N.F., Brachmann, J., & CASTLE-AF Steering Committee. (2009). Catheter Ablation Versus Standard Conventional Treatment in Patients With Left Ventricular Dysfunction and Atrial Fibrillation (CASTLE-AF) – Study Design. *Pacing Clin Electrophysiol*, 32(8):987-94, DOI: 10.1111/j.1540-8159.2009.02428.x.\

**If you have persistent Afib, or long-standing persistent Afib, surgical ablation during heart surgery is more effective at making sure the Afib doesn't recur.**<sup>18-22</sup>

**Learn More at [ACTagainstAfib.com](http://ACTagainstAfib.com).**

EF: ejection fraction

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Clinical results are not predictive and individual results may vary.



**Before your heart surgery, ask your surgeon if ablation to treat your Afib at the same time is right for you.**

To find out more, visit [ACTagainstAfib.com](http://ACTagainstAfib.com).

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WHY **TREAT** AFIB SURGICALLY?

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