

Atrial Fibrillation (AF) Detection: Talking about AF with patients at the point of testing

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What is Atrial Fibrillation?

- Atrial fibrillation (or AF) is when you have an irregular heart rhythm. Sometimes your heart beats very fast or slow.
- It can happen occasionally or be ongoing
- Up to half of people with AF have no symptoms but some patients experience dizziness, shortness of breath, and tiredness
- Sometimes people with AF notice heart palpitations where your heart feels like it is pounding or beating irregularly or faster

Testing for AF

- We can test for AF quite simply with a hand held device called MyDiagnostick so that you may “know your heart rhythm”
- If we find you may have AF, we will help to manage it, reduce symptoms if you have any and any risks associated with AF
- Simply by holding on to both ends of the device it can take a reading of your heart rhythm and check for AF within 1 minute
- If the device finds an irregular heart rhythm, we will refer you for more tests to confirm if this is AF
- Even if the test is normal today, should you have any concerns about your symptoms then contact your GP surgery

Why test for Atrial Fibrillation?

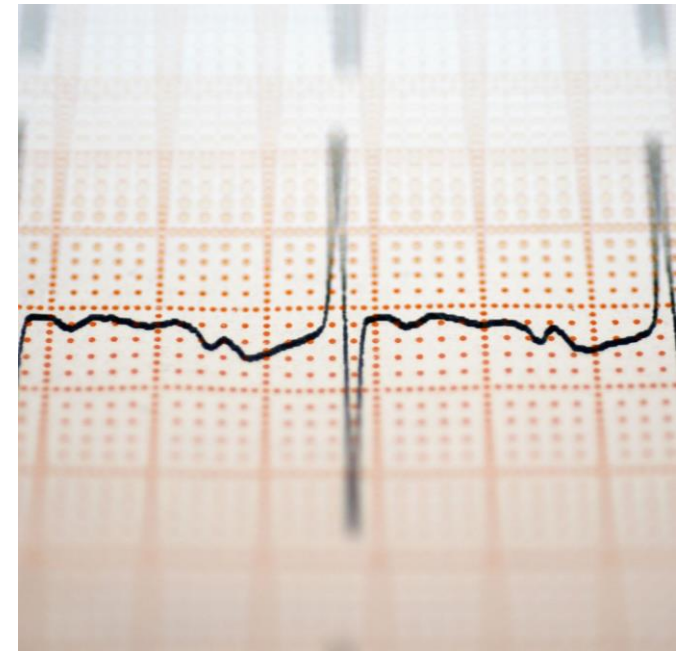
- If you have AF, depending on other health conditions and risk factors you may also have, this might increase your risk of a blood clot which can cause a stroke
- If we find AF and it's confirmed, we may treat it with medicines to control your heart rate and reduce the risk of blood clots
- *If patient raises concern related to treating with Warfarin - There are a number of other anticoagulation medicines now used to stop blood clots and your doctor/pharmacist/nurse will help to find the best medication for you*

If you get a red reading

- The device shows you may have an irregular heart rhythm
- It is positive that we may have detected something that may now be managed
- If AF is detected in the diagnosis you may have had it for months/years and now it will be managed and you will be protected
- In order to confirm this, we will refer you for an ECG (electrocardiogram) a non-invasive test which can further test your heart rhythm
- If you have any concerns please call (*add central contact at practice*)

ECG referrals

- You will be referred to [discuss local pathway] for the ECG
- You should hear in [time frame for your area] eg 2 weeks
- This will be by [how will they contact them about an appt]
- After the test you will get the results via [pathway] in [timeframe]



If you get a red reading

- Ask if they have any questions...
- Would they like any information about AF?
- I can send you through information from the British Heart Foundation to read on AF if you would like? [Atrial fibrillation \(AF\) - BHF](#)
- Provide information on what to look out for and what to do whilst awaiting further tests:
- Living a healthy lifestyle & emotional support and wellbeing
- Signs that may need a 111 call or GP assessment: chest pain, shortness of breath, feeling faint or dizzy

If you get a green reading

- The device is showing your heart rhythm is not showing any signs of possible AF right now
- However, if you have any concerns or symptoms, please do make an appointment to see us and get retested as sometimes AF can come and go
- Signs to be aware of: palpitations- feeling like your heart is racing, pounding, fluttering or like you have missed heartbeats; chest pain, shortness of breath, feeling dizzy or faint- contact 111 or your GP
- Ask if they have any questions...

Top tips to reduce risk of atrial fibrillation

- Monitor and control blood pressure
- Diabetes management
- Healthy weight (consider referral to weight management)
- Lowering cholesterol
- Reduce stress
- Be physically active
- Eat healthily
- Cut down on alcohol
- Stopping smoking

Some palpitation triggers are:

- Alcohol
- Smoking
- Caffeine
- Spicy food
- Emotional stress
- Recreational drugs

Poster to be used for participating practices and sites for AF detection

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Do you know your heart rhythm?

Did you know that your heart beats around 100,000 times per day?

This practice has a hand-held device to check your heart rhythm

It is a quick and simple test to do

Please ask if you would like us to check if you may have atrial fibrillation (an abnormal heart rhythm)

We are participating in a project across South- East London to raise awareness of atrial fibrillation and how to manage it to protect your heart

Please ask your doctor, nurse or pharmacist if you would like further information

