

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION

Atrial fibrillation is an abnormal heart rhythm.

What is it?

Normally the top of the heart (atria) squeezes blood into the bottom of the heart (ventricle). Once this happens, the bottom of the heart squeezes and pumps blood to the head and the rest of the body. In atrial fibrillation, the top part of the heart doesn't squeeze.

How do blood clots form?

When blood stays still, it can form a blood clot. Since the atria are not squeezing and pumping, blood can form clots inside them.

Why are blood clots dangerous?

Blood clots can act like a cork in a bottle. If they leave the heart, they can get stuck and block blood flow to the brain.

How can blood clots cause a stroke?

When this clot (or cork) is trapped in a blood vessel that goes to the brain, it blocks blood and nutrients. This blockage and damage to the brain is called a stroke.

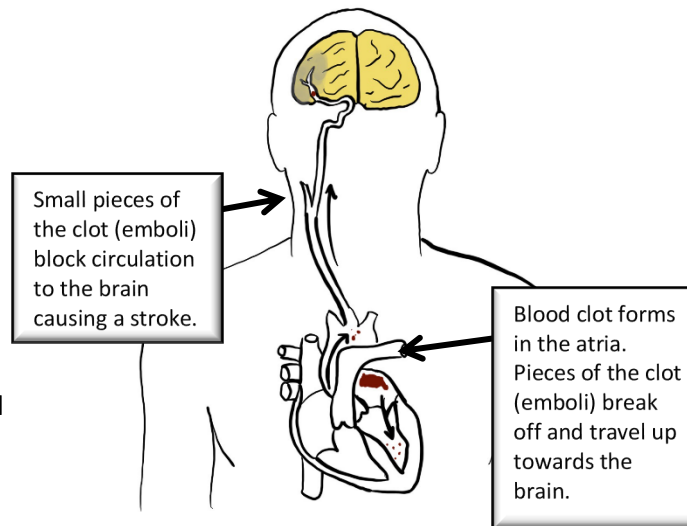
Why does my doctor treat atrial fibrillation?

Your doctor cares about your atrial fibrillation because he or she wants to prevent you from having a stroke.

What will it do to me?

When atrial fibrillation is not well controlled, there are 3 main symptoms of which you need to be aware:

1. **Shortness of breath**
2. **Racing or pounding heartbeat**
3. **Dizziness or lightheadedness**



What can I do?

Your doctor may discuss starting two common medications with you.

Two types of medications can help to reduce the risk of a stroke:

1. Beta-Blocker

Medications called beta-blockers can slow down your heart rate. Slowing your heart down gives it more time to fill up with blood and pump effectively.

2. Blood Thinners

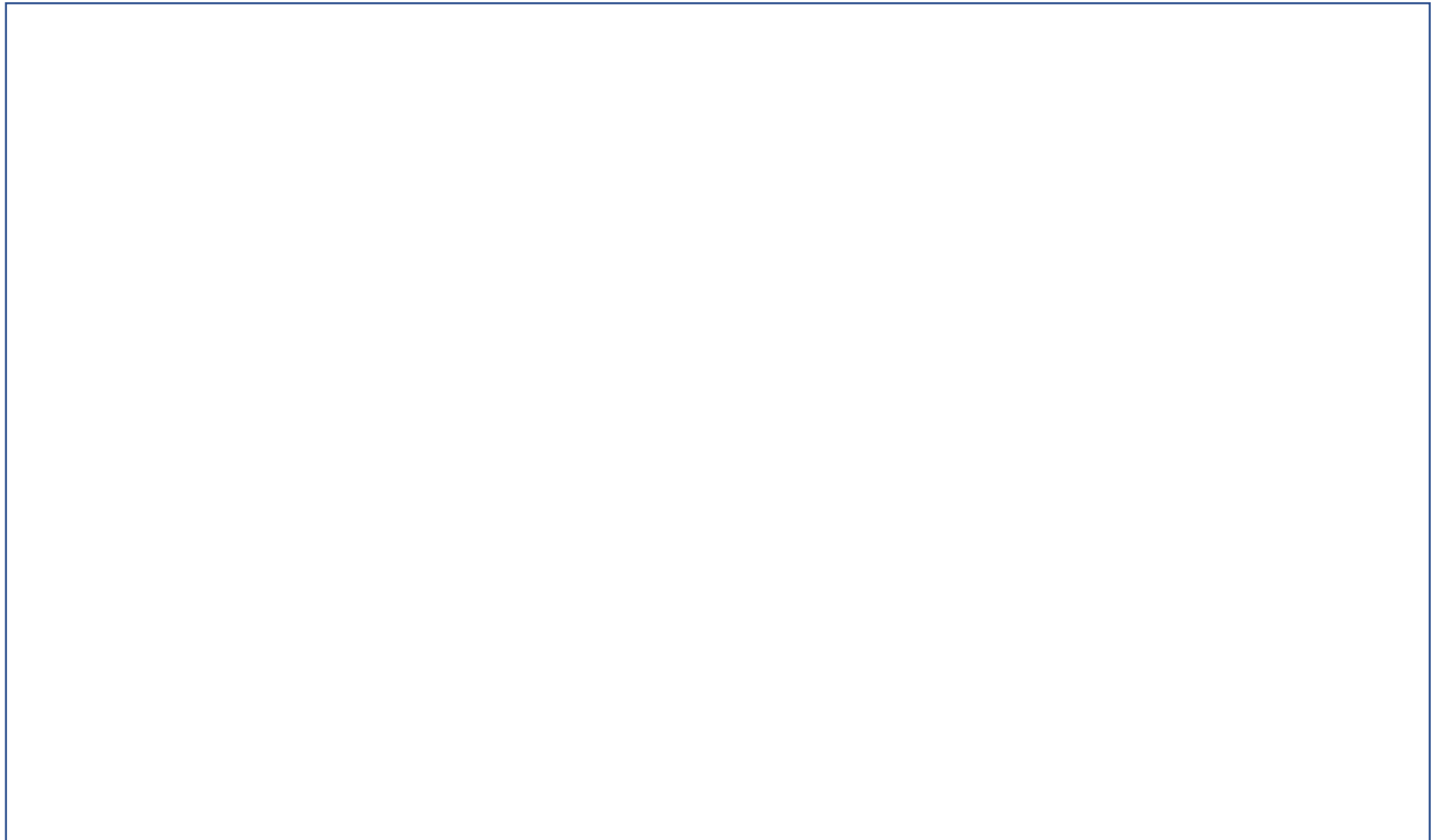
These medications work to make the blood less sticky. When blood is less sticky, it is less likely to form a clot.

Still have questions? Ask us @ teachandlearnfm.com

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Patient-doctor learning area: Use this area to write down questions for your doctor or use it as a space for your doctor to answer your questions.



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