

# Natural Help 4...

# Arrhythmias



## What are Cardiac Arrhythmias?

Cardiac arrhythmias, also commonly called arrhythmias, are **irregularities of the heart beat**. For the most part, the normal, constant rhythm of the heartbeat that ensures essential blood flow throughout the body goes unnoticed.

But for some people, problems arise as the **electrical impulses that synchronize the heart beat don't function properly**, causing the heart to beat out of rhythm - too quickly, too slowly or with an irregular pattern.

Arrhythmias are **fairly common**. Most people have had at least one experience where it feels as if the heart has skipped a beat, or has given an unexpected flutter. For many, the **experience is usually not cause for concern**. However, while many arrhythmias are harmless, **some can be extremely dangerous** and require medical treatment.

## What are the Different Types of Cardiac Arrhythmias?

There are a number of different types of arrhythmias, differing in severity, point of origin and the speed at which they cause the heart to beat. There are **three main categories** according to rate:

- **Tachycardia** - A fast heartbeat (greater than 100 beats a minute)
- **Bradycardia** - A slow heartbeat (less than 60 beats a minute)
- **Premature heartbeats** - an extra beat between two normal heartbeats

Not all of these arrhythmias are dangerous, and some are quite normal. For example, a heart rate greater than 100 beats per minute may be the normal response to exercise, anxiety or fear. However, **when arrhythmias occur unexpectedly**, there may be **cause for concern**.

## Where Can Cardiac Arrhythmias Occur?

Arrhythmias also **occur in different chambers of the heart**. In general, arrhythmias that start in the lower chambers of the heart (the ventricles) are more serious than those that start in the upper chambers (the atria).

- **Arterial fibrillation**: occurring in the atria, this arrhythmia causes the heart to beat too fast and irregularly. A potentially dangerous condition.
- **Sick sinus syndrome**: This occurs when the SA node (usually responsible for regular electrical impulses in your heart) is not working properly, causing the heart to beat too fast, too slowly, or both.

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- **Paroxysmal atrial tachycardia:** this causes the heart to have periods where it beats regularly but very fast. While it may sometimes feel uncomfortable, this condition is usually not harmful.
- **Ventricular tachycardia:** this [arrhythmia](#) originates in the ventricles and causes the heart to beat too fast. As a result, the body doesn't get enough blood and the consequences are very serious. This type of [arrhythmia](#) needs immediate medical attention.

## Diagnosing Cardiac Arrhythmias

If you do experience some of the above symptoms, it is **advisable to seek medical attention**. Your physician will run some tests to determine whether or not there is an [arrhythmia](#), and **suggest a treatment plan** if necessary.

## What are the Symptoms of Cardiac Arrhythmias?

For many people, [arrhythmias](#) **usually do not cause any signs or symptoms**. Doctors sometimes identify heart [arrhythmias](#) for the first time at a routine check-up. For others, the signs and symptoms of heart [arrhythmias](#) are very noticeable and **may cause some distress**. These may include:

- Sensation of fluttering in the chest
- Racing heartbeat
- Noticeably slow heartbeat
- Chest pain
- [Fatigue](#)
- Shortness of breath
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Fainting or near fainting spells
- Paleness
- Excessive sweating

When symptoms are noticeable, people often fear the worst. However, the **severity of the symptoms does not necessarily correlate with the severity of the problem**. Some people who experience [arrhythmias](#) may not have a serious problem at all, while others who don't notice the symptoms may have a life-threatening condition.

## What is Involved with a Screening for Cardiac Arrhythmias?

Screening will include **extensive questions** regarding **duration and onset of symptoms** and **possible triggers**. Be sure to mention if you or any family members have a history of heart conditions or [thyroid](#) problems.

Once your health care provider has listened to your heart, other passive heart monitoring tests such as an Electrocardiogram (ECG), a holter or event monitor, or an Echocardiogram may be used.

In some cases, your doctor will try to induce an [arrhythmia](#), which may include tests such a stress test, tilt table test, or Electrophysiologic testing and mapping.

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### Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

# What Causes Cardiac Arrhythmias?

There are a **number of causes for [arrhythmias](#)**, and sometimes there are no recognizable causes at all. In people with healthy hearts and those with no other underlying health concerns, developing a sustained [arrhythmia](#) is rare.

However, in those who have a pre-existing condition that influences blood supply to the heart or includes any damage such as scarring to the heart tissue, [arrhythmias](#) become more likely. For this reason, **one of the most common causes** of an [arrhythmia](#) is [heart disease](#), as this causes scarring which can interfere with the electric impulses of the heart.

## Other Conditions Linked to Cardiac Arrhythmias

Other common conditions known to result in [arrhythmias](#) include:

- [Obesity](#)
- Sleep apnea
- [Diabetes](#)
- [Thyroid problems](#)
- [High blood pressure](#)
- Electrolyte imbalance (a common symptom of an [eating disorder](#))

In addition, lifestyle factors such as [stress](#), excessive caffeine or alcohol intake, [smoking](#), and the use of certain illicit drugs or medications (commonly [weight loss pills](#), cough syrups and [cold](#) medicines) can all cause [arrhythmias](#).

## Help for Cardiac Arrhythmias

If you have been diagnosed with an [arrhythmia](#), **treatment may or may not be necessary**, depending on the cause, the severity and type of [arrhythmia](#). For some people, [arrhythmias](#) are easily managed with a few lifestyle modifications and are little cause for concern. However, if your doctor suspects that the [arrhythmia](#) may cause serious symptoms, or that it may result in complications, medical treatment will be necessary.

By eating a heart-healthy diet, following a regular exercise plan, and reducing the intake of alcohol and caffeine, the **occurrence of [arrhythmias](#) can be greatly reduced and prevented**. If you do smoke, consider [quitting smoking naturally](#), as tobacco is a known trigger of a number of health concerns related to the heart.

In addition, there are many **natural herbal and homeopathic remedies** available that can be successfully used as part of a holistic treatment program for optimal heart health.

## Treatment Options

### Conventional Medical Treatments

Once the need has been verified for medical treatment, your doctor will advise

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which treatment will suit your specific condition. Make sure to ask your physician about all possible options and **possible consequences of each procedure**.

Unfortunately, some people with [arrhythmias](#) receive unnecessary medical treatment, which can **result in cardiac problems**.

## Lifestyle Modifications

For harmless or sporadic [arrhythmias](#), sometimes all that is needed is the implementation of **heart-healthy behaviors**. For those with more serious [arrhythmias](#), in addition to the prescribed medical treatment, **lifestyle changes** are an essential part of a **holistic treatment plan**.

## Natural Herbal and Homeopathic Remedies

The herbal ingredient Crataegus oxyacantha (Hawthorn) is highly praised for its beneficial effects on heart health, and has been traditionally used to **reduce [arrhythmias](#)**. Hawthorn is known to regulate heart actions, normalize [blood pressure](#), and strengthen the heart muscles, thus **reducing the occurrence of heart related problems**.

Other herbs such as Passiflora incarnate, Viburnum opulus and Ginkgo biloba are also well-known their benefit on heart health, and **all have been implicated in the reduction of [cardiac arrhythmias](#)**. These herbs also help to **reduce the underlying triggers** of [arrhythmias](#) such as [stress](#), muscle convulsions and [high blood pressure](#).

*Note: Remember that you should always consult your doctor before making changes in prescription medication. Also be sure to source to obtain any natural remedies from a reputable company to ensure maximum safety and efficacy.*

## What are the Complications Related to Arrhythmias?

While many [arrhythmias](#) are harmless, some can be very serious. For this reason, it is **essential to have any suspected [arrhythmias](#) evaluated** by a medical professional.

Complications that may arise from severe [arrhythmias](#) include:

- Loss of consciousness
- Congestive heart failure
- Stroke
- Sudden death

## Tips for Coping with Cardiac Arrhythmias

Many [arrhythmias](#) can be **attributed to poor lifestyle choices and underlying heart problems**. For this reason, it is important to make the appropriate heart-healthy lifestyle changes that will keep all organs and systems functioning at optimal levels, including:

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- Keep saturated fats to a minimum, and limit your daily intake of meat (especially red meat) to no more than 170g per day.
- Stay physically active and try to get at least 30 minutes of exercise per day. Take advantage of movement opportunities throughout the day such as taking the stairs or parking further away than you need to.
- If you do smoke, then you should try to quit smoking naturally.
- Reduce your intake of alcohol.
- Manage [stress](#) levels and learn to relax. Don't take on more responsibilities than you can handle.
- Avoid stimulants such as caffeine and certain medications.

*Note: You should always inform your physician before taking new medications to ensure that they do not interfere with your condition.*

## The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is not the only treatment option. Conventional western medicine, often called allopathic medicine, is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools and most pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine. Allopathic medicine is also sometimes called orthodox medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that, only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available – and freely used even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is ‘better’ than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that both have a role to play in the treatment program.

Natural medicine has often been frowned on by conventional doctors, especially by those who did not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the body has an innate capacity to heal itself. While natural medicines are often called ‘alternative’ or ‘complimentary’ medicines, they are, in fact, a unique and independent form of medicine in their own right, well able to treat a variety of conditions. Perhaps the term ‘holistic’ medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine, which encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "...

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more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to support health (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer and that, in many cases, holistic medicine can accomplish just as much, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing.

In many cases, they can succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a long history of usage and there is a wealth of empirical evidence to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines must be manufactured in the correct way, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While ‘standardized’ extracts may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have grave disadvantages. These include an increase in side effects as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, always choose wisely. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor in order that your condition may be monitored. Well informed and supportive practitioners will support patients who want to take responsibility for their own health.

In the treatment of depression, the following herbal and homeopathic remedies are often used as part of the treatment plan.



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