

Arrhythmias and Cardiac Ablation

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What is an Arrhythmia?

An arrhythmia is an abnormal rhythm of the heart. It is not always felt, but when it is, it can cause a fast or a slow heart rate. When the heart rate is below sixty beats per minute, it is called bradycardia. When the heart rate is above one hundred beats per minute, it is called tachycardia. Arrhythmia sends more than half a million people to the hospital each year. They are more common in middle-age adults. Approximately one in five adults have an arrhythmia.

Most arrhythmias are not very serious. In fact, most will never be detected. In cases where it is serious, it must be taken care of as soon as possible or it can lead to death.

An arrhythmia may occur when the heartbeat begins in a node other than the sinus node, the sinus node develops an abnormal rate, or if the patient has a heart block.

What Causes Arrhythmias?

Having an arrhythmia does not mean that one has a heart disease, but a heart disease may have caused it. Other causes are stress, tobacco, alcohol, diet pills, and cough and cold medicines.

What are the Symptoms Associated Arrhythmias?

The symptoms most people will notice are a fast heartbeat, the heart skipping a beat, or a fluttering in the chest. Everyone feels these symptoms occasionally throughout their life, but there is no need to worry unless it happens on a regular basis.

How Do You Detect and Treat an Arrhythmia?

Arrhythmias can be detected by an electrocardiogram (ECG), transtelephonic monitoring, or by an electrophysiologic study (EPS).

They can be treated by drugs, cardioversion, a defibrillator, an artificial pacemaker, cardiac ablation, or surgery.

What is Cardiac Ablation?

Cardiac ablation is a quick and relatively painless procedure used to treat arrhythmia. It instantly fixes the heart and only takes a day to recover. The success rate is over ninety percent.

How is Cardiac Ablation Done?

In order for a doctor to perform this procedure, he must first do an electrophysiologic (EPS) study. This is done at the same sitting as the cardiac ablation. After that is done, and he knows exactly where the arrhythmia is, the cardiac ablation can be done.

A small incision is made, usually in the groin, and a catheter is then placed into a vein or artery. The doctor will usually try to start a fast heartbeat, which will help in further determining exactly where the arrhythmia is. After this is done, the catheter will "burn" the heart tissue, usually a blocked passageway, causing the problem.

The only discomfort felt is the placement of local anesthesia. Patients may also feel a burning sensation in the heart during the actual ablation.

References:

<http://www.cardioassoc.com>

<http://www.freeportmunicipal.com>