



Parish Nurse Notes – September 2025

September is Atrial Fibrillation Awareness Month.

WHAT IS ATRIAL FIBRILLATION (AFib)? AFib is the most common type of irregular heartbeat that often causes the heart to beat too quickly. One of the biggest concerns with AFib is the risk of stroke. In fact, people with AFib have approximately 5 times greater risk of stroke than those who do not have AFib. It is estimated that by 2030, approximately 12 million people in the U.S. will have AFib.

WHAT ARE SYMPTOMS OF AFIB? It can be easy to dismiss symptoms of AFib, because they may come and go, and they can vary. Talk to your doctor if you experience one or more of these symptoms:

- Irregular heartbeat
- Heart palpitations
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Lightheadedness

If you experience one or more of these symptoms, contact your physician right away. This is no time to wait. Seeking medical attention early may reduce the chance of AFib leading to something more serious.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE RISK FACTORS FOR DEVELOPING AFIB?

- Age 65 and older
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Sleep apnea

- Heavy alcohol use
- Heart disease, such as congestive heart failure and coronary artery disease
- Prior heart attacks
- Smoking
- Obesity
- Overactive thyroid

HOW CAN AFib LEAD TO A STROKE?

During a normal heartbeat, the upper chambers (atria) and lower chambers (ventricles) of the heart work together to pump blood to the rest of the body. AFib occurs when the upper chambers of the heart beat irregularly, and do not pump all of the blood to the lower chambers, causing some blood to pool and potentially form clots. If a clot breaks loose, it can travel through the bloodstream to the brain and lead to a stroke. Strokes related to AFib are often more severe compared to strokes with other underlying causes. People with AFib are approximately 5 times more likely to have a stroke.

Remember: Familiarize yourself with AFib symptoms and risk factors. It is also important to understand that you can experience symptoms or have risk factors but NOT have AFib. You could also have AFib and not experience any symptoms. If you have one or more of these symptoms, contact your doctor or healthcare provider right away.

For more information, go to:

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/atrial-fibrillation/treatment-and-prevention-of-atrial-fibrillation>

<https://www.notimetowait.com/afib>

If you have questions for Glenn Burdick or Diane Jones, parish nurses, please leave a message at 540-662-3824.