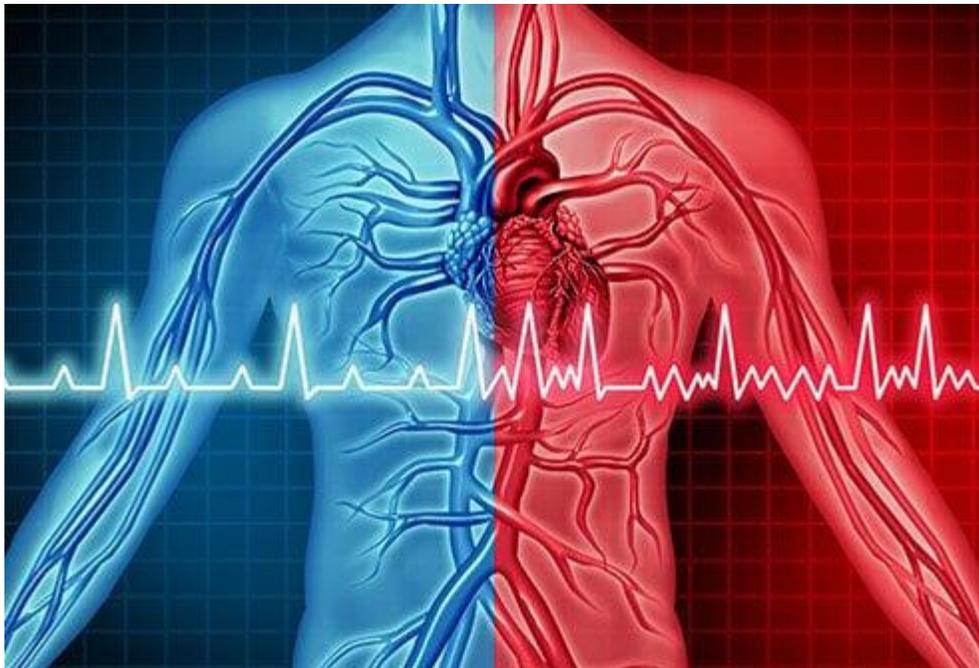


**Jewish General Hospital**  
**Clinical Access Service**  
**Atrial Fibrillation**



5767 Légaré Street, Montréal, QC H3T 1E4

Pavilion K, S1-101

Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

Tel: 514-340-8222, Extension 22324

You were referred to the Clinical Access Service of the Jewish General Hospital (JGH) because your doctor or nurse practitioner (NP) wants to investigate the newly diagnosed atrial fibrillation on your electrocardiogram (ECG). The Clinical Access Service will arrange all of your tests, and you will consult with a JGH cardiologist if needed.

## **WHAT IS ATRIAL FIBRILLATION?**

Atrial fibrillation, also known as AFib, is a type of irregular heart rhythm.

Normally, your heart pumps blood among its four chambers by using an electrical signal, the heart rhythm. Blood comes into the heart's atria (its two upper chambers) and then gets pushed into its ventricles (its two lower chambers), before being pushed into the rest of your body. AFib happens when the atria are not pushing the blood into the ventricles the way they are supposed to, the result of a problem with the electrical signal, known as an arrhythmia.

AFib causes an irregular and sometimes fast heartbeat. It is one of the most common arrhythmias in Canada, affecting nearly 200 000 people.

Your doctor and/or Nurse Practitioner would like you to be tested to determine whether you have AFib. These tests include an ECG, blood tests, a chest x-ray, and possibly an evaluation by a cardiologist who will determine your treatment plan.

## **SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS**

The symptoms of AFib are not always the same for everyone. Some people with AFib do not have any symptoms, while others can have symptoms that include:

- Palpitations (most common), the feeling that your heart is beating very fast
- Irregular heartbeat when you check your pulse, as if it is skipping a beat
- Chest discomfort, chest pain or pressure
- Shortness of breath, especially with effort, at rest or during a stressful time
- Dizziness or feeling lightheaded or faint
- Sweating
- Feeling tired or having no energy
- Anxiety

## **SOME RISK FACTORS FOR ATRIAL FIBRILLATION**

- High blood pressure, known as hypertension (most common cause)
- Cardiovascular disease
- Diabetes
- Thyroid disease
- Excessive alcohol consumption
- Obesity
- Lack of exercise (sedentary lifestyle)
- Smoking

## **POSSIBLE TESTS**

**BLOOD TEST** – Your blood is analyzed to determine whether any other cause for your irregular heart rate may exist.

**ELECTROCARDIOGRAM (ECG)** – A simple and painless test that examines your heart's electrical signal. The nurse places some stickers on your chest, arms and legs, and connects them to wires attached to a machine, which captures your heart's rhythm.

**CHEST X-RAY** – A painless and quick test that uses a small amount of radiation to take pictures of the organs, tissues and bones in your chest. This helps to determine whether there are any problems with your heart, lungs and airways.

**ECHOCARDIOGRAM** – A harmless test using ultrasound to take pictures of your heart - that involves looking at the chambers, walls and blood vessels. With this test, the doctor can determine whether there are problems with how your heart beats and pumps blood.

### **WHAT SHOULD YOU DO DURING THE INVESTIGATION OF YOUR ATRIAL FIBRILLATION?**

The most serious complication of AFib is a blood clot, which can lead to:

- a stroke (a clot in the brain),
- a pulmonary embolism (a clot in the lungs) or
- a myocardial infarction (a clot in your heart), also known as heart attack.

For this reason, it is very important to be properly assessed and treated by your healthcare provider.

It's also important to be alert and to recognize the signs and symptoms of complications, and to go to the nearest emergency room if you experience any difficulties.

### **GO TO THE EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT IF YOU HAVE ANY OF THE SYMPTOMS SHOWN BELOW**

- **Signs and symptoms of stroke**
  - Weakness: Sudden loss of strength on one side of your body or face, even if it does not last long
  - Trouble speaking: Sudden difficulty in speaking or understanding, even if it does not last long
  - Vision troubles: Sudden loss of vision, or double vision, even if does not last long
  - Headache: Sudden, intense and unusual headache
  - Dizziness: Sudden loss of balance, especially with any of the above signs
- **Signs and symptoms of a pulmonary embolism**
  - Sudden shortness of breath or difficulty in breathing (most common)
  - Chest pain
  - Dizziness
  - Feeling like you might faint
  - Coughing up blood
- **Signs and symptoms of myocardial infarction (MI)**
  - Chest pain or discomfort or squeezing
  - Pain or discomfort in your jaw, neck, shoulder, back and arms
  - Shortness of breath
  - Sweating
  - Feeling like you might faint
  - Nausea or indigestion

### **YOUR APPOINTMENTS**

- Please arrive 10 minutes before the scheduled time of your appointments.
- If you cannot come to your appointment, call the Clinical Access Service to reschedule.
- At the end of the tests, you will get an appointment to see the cardiologist for further evaluation, if indicated.

## **IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS, YOU CAN CONTACT:**

- The nurse at the Clinical Access Service, where you are being followed, during office hours at 514-340-8222, extension 22324
- Info-Santé 24/7 by calling 811
- Once you are discharged from the clinic, your referring healthcare provider (MD or NP) will receive a copy of your test results and consultations. They will answer your questions.

## **EXTRA RESOURCES**

- <https://www.jgh.ca/patients-visitors/patient-family-resource-centre/> - JGH Patient and Family Resource Centre
- <https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/atrial-fibrillation/afib-resources-for-patients--professionals>
- [https://www.heart.org/-/media/data-import/downloadables/3/9/2/pe-afib-faqs-of-atrial-fibrillation-ucm\\_424424.pdf?la=en&hash=5BA629F479EFB41D66145FF53BD66DFF2F135346](https://www.heart.org/-/media/data-import/downloadables/3/9/2/pe-afib-faqs-of-atrial-fibrillation-ucm_424424.pdf?la=en&hash=5BA629F479EFB41D66145FF53BD66DFF2F135346)<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/atrial-fibrillation/what-is-atrial-fibrillation-afib-or-af>

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### *DISCLAIMER*

*The present document contains general information, intended for informational purposes only and cannot be interpreted to constitute medical advice or advice from any other healthcare professional. The information provided in the document cannot in any case be considered or interpreted to represent an alternative to the advice of a healthcare professional, nor can it be used to treat a particular condition.*

*Do not delay obtaining advice from a healthcare professional, disregard the advice of a healthcare professional or deviate from the treatment prescribed by a healthcare professional. For any questions pertaining to the information provided in this document, please consult a healthcare professional.*

*If you are feeling unwell or in case of emergency, please consult a doctor or another healthcare professional or present yourself to the nearest emergency room immediately.*