

Antiarrhythmic Medications

Narrator

The heart may be the most important organ in the body. When all its parts are working normally, it beats an average of 100-thousand times a day. However, should the heart start skipping beats, an occurrence called arrhythmia; it may need the help of antiarrhythmic medications to get it back in sync.

Michele Weizer, Pharmacist, Pharmacotherapy Specialist

When you have an arrhythmia, in some cases, those arrhythmias can lead to a heart attack and sometimes death. So, these medications are nice because they restore your rhythm.

Narrator

Once someone begins taking an antiarrhythmic medication, it generally means they should continue taking it for the rest of his or her life. Stopping without talking to your doctor first can be dangerous.

Michele Weizer, Pharmacist, Pharmacotherapy Specialist

Patients who need antiarrhythmic medication usually need it because there's a defect or abnormality or anomaly in the heart that can't be cured any other way. And a lot of patients who have atrial fibrillation, will try a medication called amioderone. And with amioderone, it does have quite a number of side effects that we monitor for. Generally, early on, we don't see those side effects, but some of them can develop at a month or 2 or 3 years down the road. So when you take that medication, you will find that you'll have to see your doctor frequently.

Narrator

Side effects that are serious and can occur early on in treatment are shortness of breath and wheezing. You should call your doctor right away and seek medical treatment if this occurs. Changes in vision is a side effect that can occur over time.

Michele Weizer, Pharmacist, Pharmacotherapy Specialist

When you get a prescription for any of the antiarrhythmic medications, you will have an FDA medication guide that will be given to you that will have all kinds of information about that. But you also have your pharmacist that you can ask questions to, as well as the physician who gives you the prescription.

Narrator

Understanding what to expect and watch for is key.