

Atrial Fibrillation: Hospital Discharge

When you are ready to be discharged from the hospital make sure you understand all the steps you need to take to manage your atrial fibrillation at home.

Before you leave the hospital, a member of your healthcare team will go over your discharge information with you. You will be given written copies of your discharge instructions.

It may help to have a family member or friend with you to help remember the information and ask any questions you still have.

Your discharge instructions are just for you. They will help you manage your atrial fibrillation. They will also include the name of the person you should contact if you have questions, and what to do in case of an emergency.

While your instructions will be specific to you, there are general guidelines that everyone should follow.

Discharge instructions include: when to make your follow-up appointment; information on medications; nutrition goals; taking your pulse; managing blood pressure; advice on how to quit smoking if you smoke; what symptoms to watch for; and guidelines on physical activity.

It's a good idea to have your follow-up appointment scheduled before you leave the hospital. Make sure you know the date, time, and location of the appointment.

Your healthcare provider will also go over any medications you have been prescribed.

Make sure you know what you will be taking and understand what each is for.

Take them as directed and let your healthcare provider know if there are any side effects when you take them.

There might be other medications that work better for you.

Your discharge instructions will also include your nutrition goals, particularly ways to limit caffeine. Caffeine is a stimulant and can increase your heart rate.

And talk to your healthcare provider about whether you should avoid alcohol.

Learn how to check your pulse and do it frequently. If your heartbeat is fast or irregular, contact your healthcare provider.

Talk to your healthcare provider about managing your blood pressure, and ways you can reach your blood pressure goals.

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If you smoke, you **MUST** quit. If you continue to use tobacco, you are at a greater risk for heart attack, stroke, and further heart damage.

If you haven't already done so, schedule a meeting with your healthcare provider to get help quitting smoking.

Watch for any symptoms of atrial fibrillation, such as: fluttering or quivering heartbeat; weakness or tiredness; fainting or confusion; shortness of breath; fatigue during exercise; and sweating.

Contact your healthcare provider if you experience any of these symptoms.

Your discharge instructions will also include physical activity guidelines.

Staying active is one of the best things you can do for your heart health, even when you have atrial fibrillation.

Your healthcare provider may recommend you attend cardiac rehabilitation to help you get active and strengthen your heart. Cardiac rehab can help to reduce your resting heartbeat and improve your symptoms of atrial fibrillation.

You are ready to leave the hospital and go home. Follow your discharge instructions carefully every day in order to manage your atrial fibrillation, control your symptoms and avoid a return trip to the hospital.