Atrial Flutter

Atrial flutter is a type of abnormal heart rhythm, also called an Arrhythmia.

Your heart has two pumps that work side-by-side to move blood around your body. The right side of your heart pumps blood to your lungs to receive oxygen. The left side sends the oxygen-filled blood out to your body.

Normally, the rhythm of your heart is very organized. It's controlled by a built-in electrical system. But sometimes that electrical system can go haywire causing an atrial flutter.

Atrial flutter begins in the atria, or the upper chambers of your heart. With atrial flutter, your atria beat more quickly and flutter instead of fully squeezing as they should.

This usually isn't life-threatening, but it does make it difficult for your heart to pump blood effectively.

Since the heart's upper chambers do not pump blood as well as they should, blood that should move out of these chambers gets left behind. This can cause a clot to form. If the clot travels from the heart into your brain it can cause a stroke.

Over time, an increased heart rate can lead to a weakening of the heart muscle, also called cardiomyopathy which can lead to heart failure.

And an atrial flutter can also develop into atrial fibrillation, which means your heartbeat is both fast and irregular.

If you are diagnosed with atrial flutter, your healthcare provider will recommend treatment options that are best for you. These may include lifestyle changes as well as medicines.

Your provider may also try to restore your heart's normal rhythm by using a procedure called electrical cardioversion. Cardioversion uses a short electrical shock to try to get your heart's rhythm back to normal.

If medicines or cardioversion don't work, your provider may recommend other options. These may include electronic devices like a pacemaker, or ablation, a procedure to control your heart's electrical signal.