



The Heart Rhythm Charity

Arrhythmia Alliance
PO Box 3697
Stratford upon Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 8YL
+44 (0) 1789 450 787
info@heartrhythmcharity.org.uk
www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk

Drug Treatment for Heart Rhythm Disorders

There are many different drugs used to treat arrhythmias and each drug may affect different people in different ways. Most serious arrhythmias are treated with an implantable device these days, but some patients may require medication in addition to reduce the need for the use of this device.

What can I expect?

Before commencing your drug (or drugs) your doctor will explain to you how many tablets you need to take, and any possible side effects. These side effects will vary from patient to patient, and it is important to remember that most people get few or no side effects.

The treatment you are prescribed is often a compromise between the risks associated with your arrhythmia and the side effects of the treatment. This may mean a situation where you suffer occasional mild arrhythmia in order to avoid constant, unpleasant side effects.

Anti-arrhythmic drugs are used to suppress rather than cure your arrhythmia, so you should expect to take the drug indefinitely.

If you are planning a pregnancy, you should mention this to your cardiologist or arrhythmia nurse.

What about other medication?

It is important that you take your prescription or the original packets for ALL your tablets whenever you visit a doctor. This helps reduce mistakes in prescribing and allows doctors to know whether any drugs you are taking might influence other drugs they may want to prescribe.

What should I do if I feel really ill with my medication?

If you do have any side effects that you feel are not tolerable, contact your doctor BEFORE stopping any medication, as you may then be offered another drug that suits you better. You should not stop taking the tablets suddenly without contacting your doctor as this may result in a 'relapse' worsening of your arrhythmia.

If in doubt, contact your GP, cardiologist or arrhythmia nurse.

What if my tablets don't work?

If your first drug does not work, or results in intolerable side effects there is likely to be an alternative available. You may need to try several drugs before finding the right one for you. When all suitable drugs have been tried or if your rhythm is considered to be likely to result in you coming to harm, other treatments will be discussed.