



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

## Tachycardia (Fast Heart Rhythm)

A healthy heart will normally beat in a steady and coordinated way. It will slow down or speed up depending on the body's needs. The rate at which your heart beats is important because it influences how much blood and oxygen circulates around the body.

When the heart rhythm is under normal control, it is referred to as sinus rhythm. When in sinus rhythm the heart's natural pacemaker controls the rhythm. The hormones and nervous system of the body affect this pacemaker and help in determining the heart rate.

A heartbeat that is too fast is called Tachycardia.

### Types of Arrhythmia

Arrhythmias that occur in the atria (the top chambers of the heart) are either atrial or supraventricular (above the ventricles) in origin, whereas ventricular arrhythmias start in the ventricles (the lower chambers of the heart). A doctor will determine which type of arrhythmia you may have and treat your symptoms accordingly. Many different types of arrhythmia can cause tachycardia.

### Symptoms of Tachycardia

The most common symptom of tachycardia is awareness of a rapid beat, usually referred to as palpitations. Other symptoms include:

- ♥ Shortness of breath
- ♥ Dizziness
- ♥ Actual syncope (fainting)
- ♥ Chest pain
- ♥ Severe anxiety

### Treatment Options for Tachycardia

Treatment will depend on the type, and seriousness of your arrhythmia.

Anti-arrhythmic drugs are medicines that change the electrical signals in your heart and help prevent irregular or rapid heart rhythms.

If your heart rhythm is life threatening then an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) may be advised. It has the ability to determine and stop fast ventricular arrhythmias by using extra paced beats, or delivering an electric shock to the heart.

For further information on ICDs please refer to the ICD information sheet.