

Cholesterol and AFib

Protect Your Heart. Prevent Stroke.

AFib is an irregular heartbeat that can lead to blood clots and stroke.

Some people feel a racing or fluttering heart — and some feel nothing at all.

People with AFib have up to 5 times higher risk of stroke.

Medications that prevent clots are often needed.

High LDL can clog arteries

and raise the chance of heart attack and ischemic stroke. Lower is better.

How cholesterol and AFib together affect stroke risk



They add up. AFib can raise stroke risk by causing clots. High LDL can raise stroke risk by narrowing and blocking arteries.

When you have both, your heart and brain face an even greater risk.



Having both AFib and high LDL raises your risk of stroke. AFib can cause blood clots,

while high LDL can narrow or block arteries.



Medications can lower LDL and lower the risk of heart attack and ischemic stroke. But they don't replace anti-clotting medications for AFib-related clot

risk. You may need both. Your health care team will work with you to decide.

Your Heart Protection and Stroke Prevention Plan

1 Know your numbers

Talk with your health care team about which tests are right for you and whether you need any treatment. These tests might include:

- **Total cholesterol:** ____ mg/dL
- **LDL (bad) cholesterol:** ____ mg/dL
- **HDL (good) cholesterol:** ____ mg/dL
- **Triglycerides:** ____ mg/dL
- **Lipoprotein(a) or Lp(a):** ____ mg/dL

Your health care team may consider additional tests:

- **Apolipoprotein B or ApoB:** ____ mg/dL
- **Coronary artery calcium (CAC) scan:** ____ CAC score

Talk with your health care team about what these numbers mean.

2 If needed, take medications to

- **Lower your cholesterol.** If your LDL is high, your health care professional may want to prescribe a statin, the most common type of cholesterol medication. If statins don't help you enough, or if you develop side effects, your health care professional may recommend different medications.
- **Reduce your risk for blood clots.** Anti-clotting medications (such as direct-acting oral anticoagulants, or DOACs) help prevent blood clots from forming. Blood clots are the major risk for stroke in someone with AFib. Anti-clotting medications treat clot risk from AFib and are separate from cholesterol treatment.
- **Control your heart rate or rhythm.** Medications that control your heart rate or rhythm may be prescribed. These medications are specifically for your AFib and do not address risks from high cholesterol or blood clots.

3 Build healthy habits

- **Eat smart.** More vegetables, fruits, whole grains, beans, nuts and fish. Less saturated and trans fats, sodium and added sugars.
- **Move more.** Regular activity on most days supports heart and brain health. Ask your health care team about safe options.
- **Prioritize sleep.** Getting 7-9 hours of restful sleep is important.
- **Prioritize heart-healthy strategies.** Avoid tobacco products. Limit alcohol. Manage blood pressure, diabetes and weight.

These steps support healthy cholesterol and AFib control.

Learn more at
heart.org/Cholesterol.