

Knowing more about heart arrhythmias

Heart arrhythmias occur when the electrical impulses that coordinate the heartbeat do not function properly, causing the heartbeat to be too fast, too slow or irregular.

Arrhythmias can cause symptoms such as palpitations (feeling fast heartbeat or feeling a stronger beat or an extra beat), chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness or feeling faint, fainting, and rarely sudden cardiac death. They may also be asymptomatic and detected when performing routine examinations, such as on an electrocardiogram (ECG) or a 24-hour Holter.

Arrhythmias can occur in everyone, regardless gender or age, although they are more common in people with heart problems. Arrhythmias can have many causes and not all are malignant. Generally, cardiac arrhythmias occurring in those who already have heart problems (such as previous myocardial infarction or heart failure) or a family history of sudden cardiac death are more frequently malignant.

It is advisable to see your doctor if you suddenly experience any of the symptoms described or if you notice that your heart beats faster or slower than normal (heart rate below 60 bpm or above 100bpm at rest). When undiagnosed and/or untreated correctly, arrhythmias can cause heart disease and cardiac arrest.

Currently available treatments for the treatment of arrhythmias are drugs, ablation (a kind of catheterization) or pacemaker implant or internal defibrillator. The specialist doctor determines the best treatment for each case.

To prevent cardiac arrhythmias, it is essential to adopt healthy lifestyle habits, such as a good diet, rich in vegetables and fruits and no alcohol consumption, smoke cessation, exercise at moderate intensity. At least once a year, consult with a cardiologist for preventive examinations. For exercise, it is important to know that when excessive / disproportionate it can be harmful and therefore it is essential to find out which level and type of physical activity is most appropriate for you.