

# KNOW THE FACTS – MYTHS AND REALITY ABOUT ARRHYTHMIAS

## MYTHS & REALITIES

### MYTH

If I have a fast heart rate, it just means I am stressed or am drinking too much caffeine

### REALITY

Factors like stress, caffeine intake and exercise can cause a temporary increase in heart rate. However, increased heart rate occurring more regularly or over a longer period of time can be a sign of other conditions and should be examined by a medical professional.

### MYTH

If I just have palpitations without any other symptoms, I do not need to seek medical advice

### REALITY

In some instances, palpitations are benign and do not require treatment. However, sometimes palpitations are signs of more serious arrhythmias that require further treatment, even if you do not experience any other symptoms.

### MYTH

Feeling out of breath and tired are normal aspect of old age

### REALITY

Feeling short of breath or constantly fatigued is not normal and may be a sign of a more severe condition. People experiencing these symptoms should speak to a medical professional.

### MYTH

If you have arrhythmia, you cannot exercise

### REALITY

For many arrhythmias, physical activity is possible and even beneficial. Talk to your medical professional about exercising if you have been diagnosed with arrhythmia.

### MYTH

I cannot develop arrhythmia as I am not old enough

### REALITY

Arrhythmias can develop at any age. You should be aware of arrhythmia symptoms, even if you are young.

### MYTH

If I have arrhythmia, I will need to take drugs to treat it

### REALITY

Treatment depends on the type of arrhythmia. Some arrhythmias do not require treatment. Others may require a device to help regulate your heart rhythm.

### MYTH

Arrhythmias develop by chance, there is nothing I can do to reduce my risk

### REALITY

While some arrhythmias are congenital or related to other conditions, there are several modifiable risk factors. Leading a healthy lifestyle, including moderating alcohol and caffeine intake, not smoking, and maintaining a healthy weight, all reduce your risk of arrhythmia and other cardiovascular disease.

### MYTH

Having a device like a pacemaker or ICD is dangerous

### REALITY

Having a pacemaker or an ICD implanted is usually very safe and carries a low risk of complications. A pacemaker or ICD will only be prescribed by a doctor, and they will be able to explain the potentials risks and benefits of having a device.

### MYTH

If I get a device to treat arrhythmia, I will become a burden to my family

### REALITY

You deserve to be treated. Take care of your heart. Research suggests a 56% reduction of burden on caregivers of patients who received a pacemaker device.<sup>1</sup>

### MYTH

I'd rather wait to see my doctor because I am afraid of what he/she will tell me

### REALITY

Don't delay seeing your doctor if you are experiencing symptoms of irregular heartbeat (arrhythmia). Trust your doctor and get the care you need.

### MYTH

I don't have time to worry about my heart problems

### REALITY

You matter and should be cared for. Listen to your heart. If you are having arrhythmia symptoms, talk to your doctor and get diagnosed/treated.

### MYTH

Sudden cardiac arrest is the same thing as a heart attack

### REALITY

Sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is NOT the same as a heart attack. Think of a heart attack as a plumbing problem whereas SCA is like an electrical problem. A heart attack is typically caused by a blockage in a blood vessel to the heart muscle. This can permanently damage part of the heart. SCA is an electrical malfunction that disrupts the timing and order of the pumping action. A heart attack can lead to cardiac arrest.

### MYTH

Only men get arrhythmias

### REALITY

Like other heart diseases, both men and women can get arrhythmias.

<sup>1</sup>Interventions in the diagnosis and adoption of pacemaker therapy in sinus node dysfunction patients: Results from the IMPROVE Brady study. Indian Heart J. 2022 Sep-Oct;74(5):351-356. doi: 10.1016/j.ihj.2022.09.004.