

Meet the AFib Care Team:

Who are they and what do they do?

People with atrial fibrillation, or AFib, will often see many different health care professionals at different stages of care. The table below explains the roles of health care professionals who treat heart conditions such as AFib and other health conditions commonly found in people with AFib. Understanding who can help you at different points in your AFib journey can help make it easier to know whom to turn to for help and when.

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL	DESCRIPTION	ROLE IN CARE
Bariatric Surgeon*	A doctor who helps people lose weight through surgical procedures.	Being overweight can raise your risk for AFib. Bariatric surgery, which aids in weight loss, may improve or lower the risk of AFib.
Bariatrician*	A doctor who specializes in helping people lose weight without surgery.	Supports weight loss goals to improve AFib through dietary, exercise and lifestyle guidance.
Cardiac Rehabilitation Specialist	A health care professional — either who has a bachelor's degree or is a registered nurse or respiratory therapist — trained to help people improve their heart health with exercise and nutrition.	Guides people with AFib in tailored exercise and rehabilitation programs to improve heart function and reduce complications.
Cardiologist	A doctor who diagnoses and treats conditions affecting the heart and blood vessels.	Develops personalized treatment plans, which may include medications, education, procedures and lifestyle changes, to manage AFib symptoms and reduce complications.
Cardiothoracic Surgeon	A doctor who operates on the heart or other organs in the chest.	Works closely with electrophysiologists to manage complex AFib cases requiring surgery, including patients with ventricular tachycardia or who need cardiac implantable electronic devices (CIEDs).
Critical Care Physician	A doctor, also known as an intensivist, who treats people with life-threatening conditions in the intensive care unit (ICU).	Oversees the care of people facing life-threatening conditions, focusing on stabilizing heart rhythm and managing complications.
Dietitian	A health care professional who can provide nutrition planning for people to learn what foods to eat that can improve their health.	Weight loss can improve AFib symptoms. Dietitians help manage AFib by creating personalized nutrition plans to support weight management.
Electrophysiologist	A doctor who specializes in heart rhythms and electrical signals and helps diagnose heart conditions.	With AFib, the heart's electrical system is malfunctioning. Electrophysiologists manage AFib and perform special procedures to influence heart electrical activity.
Emergency Room Physician	A doctor who stabilizes and treats people in the emergency room.	Manages urgent symptoms and serious complications related to AFib that need immediate attention.
Endocrinologist*	A doctor who diagnoses and treats conditions related to hormones in the body.	Focuses on hormone-related diseases, including diabetes and thyroid disorders, which are risk factors for AFib.
Hepatologist*	A doctor who diagnoses and treats conditions affecting the liver.	Medications used to treat heart conditions such as AFib can affect liver function. Hepatologists may monitor your liver health during AFib treatment.

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL	DESCRIPTION	ROLE IN CARE
Hospitalist	A doctor who cares for people throughout their hospital stay.	Manages the overall care of hospitalized people, including those admitted for AFib management or complications.
Nephrologist*	A doctor who diagnoses and treats conditions affecting the kidney.	Addresses kidney health, which is closely linked to heart health, managing conditions such as high blood pressure that affect AFib.
Neurologist*	A doctor who diagnoses and treats conditions affecting the brain, such as a stroke, and conditions affecting the spinal cord and nervous system.	Manages care during and after a stroke, and may also be involved in managing the risk of stroke in people diagnosed with AFib.
Nurse	A medical professional who provides medical care under the direction of a licensed doctor.	Plays a key role in monitoring, educating and providing care for people with AFib.
Nurse Practitioner (NP)	An advanced practice nurse who has completed additional education and training, earning either a master's or doctoral nursing degree.	May serve as the primary health care professional for some people. NPs provide comprehensive care including assessment, treatment planning and education, especially for managing chronic conditions such as AFib.
Obstetrician/Gynecologist (OB/GYN)*	A doctor who specializes in women's health, including pregnancy, childbirth and the reproductive system.	Provides care related to pregnancy and reproductive health, important for women with heart conditions or risk factors for heart disease.
Occupational Therapist (OT)	A health care professional with an advanced degree who helps people by addressing how to do daily activities.	May help people with AFib learn ways to make daily tasks easier, and how to improve quality of life, reduce fatigue and increase independence. OTs may also work on strategies to address cognitive challenges that can arise with AFib.
Oncologist*	A doctor who specializes in treating cancer.	Manages cancer treatment, which can include medications or therapies that affect heart health.
Pharmacist	A health care professional with special training in drugs and medicines, helping people understand how to use them safely and effectively.	Can answer questions about prescriptions and medicines for AFib, ensuring patients receive the best care.
Physical Therapist (PT)	A health care professional with an advanced degree who helps people improve how they move their bodies.	Might care for people with AFib to help them get stronger and move better, adopt an exercise program appropriate for their stage of AFib or recover from a cardiac event.
Physician Assistant (PA)	A health care professional with an advanced degree, licensed to offer direct patient care.	Works with physicians to diagnose and manage AFib, playing a key role in health education and providing follow-up care.
Primary Care Physician	A doctor trained to diagnose and treat a wide range of health conditions, helping you manage all aspects of your health.	Often the first health care professional to identify symptoms of heart conditions such as AFib and provide initial assessment and referrals.
Pulmonologist*	A doctor who diagnoses and treats conditions that affect the airways and lungs, including breathing challenges.	Focuses on lung health and conditions including sleep apnea, which can significantly affect heart rhythm and AFib.
Sports Medicine Physician*	A doctor who specializes in treating and preventing injuries related to sports and exercise.	Addresses physical fitness and injuries, potentially contributing to heart health through preventive and rehabilitative care.

*These health care professionals can be involved at any time to help manage other health conditions that may affect treatment for AFib. Depending on your individual health status, they may or may not be involved in your care.