

Heart palpitations should not be ignored

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Does the sight of your loved one make your heart skip a beat ... literally? Well, that may not be a good thing. Doctors at Baylor College of Medicine say while heart palpitations are common, they should not be ignored.

"The heart racing, pounding and skipping beats happening with no obvious reason and in the presence of other symptoms like shortness of breath, dizziness, chest discomfort or fatigue could be signs of a bigger problem," said Dr. Alireza Nazeri, assistant professor of medicine at Baylor and cardiac electrophysiologist (heart rhythm specialist) at Texas Heart Institute. "This can be due to [heart arrhythmias](#), a problem that happens when the electrical system of the heart are not functioning properly."

The most common heart arrhythmia is called Atrial Fibrillation, also known as A-fib. It happens due to fast, irregular and abnormal electrical activities in the upper chambers of the heart. Although A-fib can present with a number of symptoms including shortness of breath, dizziness or fatigue due to improper blood flow through the body, the majority of patients with A-fib are asymptomatic.

Some of the factors that can increase your risk of having A-fib include older age (60 years or older), a [family history](#) of heart diseases, obesity, [high blood pressure](#), diabetes, family history of A-fib, alcohol consumption and sleep apnea.

"A-fib increases your risk of stroke, heart failure and could lead to

frequent hospitalizations," said Nazeri. "It is important to understand your risk factors and do not ignore your symptoms. Talk to your doctor about these issues and about your [family health history](#) to decide if you need to consult a cardiac electrophysiologist."

Provided by Baylor College of Medicine

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