

## Arrhythmia Service

Cardiac Support Service  
Tel: 01271 311633

### Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

### What the arrhythmia service offers

The Arrhythmia Service is led by the Arrhythmia Care Coordinators who have extensive cardiac physiologist and nursing experience, with specialised cardiac skills. This service provides care for people who have been diagnosed with having an abnormal heart rhythm (Arrhythmia).

### What is an arrhythmia

Cardiac arrhythmia, also known as cardiac dysrhythmia, is a group of conditions in which the heart beat is irregular, too fast or too slow. Arrhythmias are caused by changes within the electrical conduction system of the heart.

There are four main types of arrhythmias: ectopic beats, supraventricular tachycardias, ventricular tachycardias and brady-arrhythmias.

1. Ectopic beats, also known as extrasystoles, refer to an electrical impulse originating from the atrium (upper chamber of the heart), or ventricle (lower chamber of the heart), that arises prematurely in the cardiac cycle.
2. Supraventricular tachycardias are fast heart rhythms that originate in the atrium. These include atrial fibrillation, atrial flutter and nodal re-entry tachycardias.
3. Ventricular tachycardias are fast heart rhythms that originate in the ventricle. These include ventricular tachycardia and fibrillation.
4. Brady-arrhythmias are slow heart rhythms caused by delays in the electrical conduction system between the atrium and ventricles.

Symptoms may include:

- Palpitations
- Fluttering in the chest
- Lightheadedness /dizziness

- Blackouts
- Shortness of breath.

For some people there may be no symptoms associated with their arrhythmia.

## **What service is provided by the arrhythmia service**

Support is provided to both patients and carers by providing a point of contact to allay fears and concerns. They will offer advice and information on:

- Arrhythmias
- Medications
- Cardiac procedures (pacemaker or defibrillator implantation etc)
- Treatment options (DC cardioversion, catheter ablation etc)
- Managing symptoms

## **Aim of the service**

The team offers high quality patient care, respecting individual wishes, beliefs and needs.

The team will help you to improve your symptoms and quality of life.

They will also listen to your views and comments and use them to develop and improve services for all patients and their families.

### **The team will:**

- Work closely with you, your GP and your hospital consultant to try and improve your symptoms and quality of life.
- Plan your care with you to meet your individual needs.
- Offer support and individualised advice for you and your family.
- Discuss and review your medication and adjust your doses if necessary.
- Monitor your condition.
- Refer you to other services where appropriate.

## **How to be referred**

You have been referred to this service by a Consultant Cardiologist.

Your clinic appointment will last up to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of an hour and you will usually have an ECG (electrocardiogram) prior to the appointment.

### **Always bring all medication to your appointments.**

We maintain regular telephone support between clinics as required.

## Service contact details

Sarah Bryant and Gemma Baker – Arrhythmia Care Coordinators – Tel: 01271 311633

The service is available Monday – Friday 8.30am – 4.30pm.

If you need help for minor accidents or unexpected health problems outside these hours or at any time during the day, including bank holidays, please call 111 (free from landlines and mobile phones).

They can offer help if you:

- Need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency.
- Think you need to go to A&E or need another NHS urgent care service
- Don't know who to call or you don't have a GP to call when you need health information or reassurance about what to do next.

## Further information

### Useful links:

British Heart Foundation (BHF) – is the nation's heart charity, saving lives through pioneering research, patient care and vital information.

- Telephone: 0300 330 3311
- Website: [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

Arrhythmia Alliance – a website for patients and professionals, which aims to promote better understanding, diagnosis, treatment and quality of life for those affected by heart rhythm disorders (cardiac arrhythmia).

- Telephone: 01789 867 501
- Website: [www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk](http://www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk)

Atrial Fibrillation Association – a website providing information, support and access to established, new or innovative treatments for atrial fibrillation.

- Telephone: 01789 867 502
- Website: [www.afa.org.uk](http://www.afa.org.uk)

## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail [ndht.pals@nhs.net](mailto:ndht.pals@nhs.net). You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

## Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at [www.careopinion.org.uk](http://www.careopinion.org.uk).

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust  
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple  
Devon EX31 4JB  
Tel. 01271 322577  
[www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk](http://www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk)

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