

Heart Arrhythmias

Inappropriate Sinus Tachycardia



Inappropriate sinus tachycardia (IST)

In this condition, the heart rate is abnormally fast but no cause can be found for the abnormal heart rate. There are several theories about what causes IST, including that it is caused by the sinus node (the part of the heart that controls the heart rate) being abnormal in some way, or due to the person being particularly sensitive to the hormone adrenaline, that causes the heart to beat more quickly. Although the cause is not known, physical stress, emotional stress, or exercise can be triggers.

Symptoms can include:



- Fast heartbeat



- Shortness of breath



- Tiredness after a small amount of exercise



- Feeling fatigued, dizzy or faint

This is not a life threatening disorder, and in some cases, no treatment is needed. For many people, symptoms improve on their own. If symptoms are interfering with the person's life, treatments can include:



- Medicines such as beta blockers, which work by slowing your heart rate and reducing blood pressure. This can help to improve symptoms such as an abnormally fast heart beat.





- Ablation of the sinus node is a treatment that is now rarely used for this condition. In ablation, heat or cold energy is used to destroy the tissues that create the abnormal signals. Risks of ablation include: infection after surgery, damage to blood vessels or heart valves, a new or worsening arrhythmia, blood clots, stroke or heart attack. Your doctor will discuss the risks and benefits of this treatment with you. Although there are a number of possible risks, the procedure is generally considered low risk, and can be done with an overnight stay or as a day procedure. The effects of ablation may not be lasting in IST.



- Cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) can be helpful in managing IST. This is a talking therapy that aims to change how a person thinks about and deals with difficulties that they are experiencing. It can be used to help cope with problems such as the symptoms experienced in IST.



Hearts4heart supports, educates and advocates for Australians living with atrial fibrillation and other heart conditions. Join our community and the conversation.

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