Is AFib Remote Monitoring for Me?

by AMY MANLEY

Monitoring Tools for Atrial Fibrillation

If you have AFib, otherwise known as arrhythmia, you may need to wear a mobile heart rhythm monitor. A remote monitor works by capturing the electrical activity in your heart and then documents that information for both you and your doctor. This type of monitor makes it possible for you to advance in your treatment by seeing when you experience an arrhythmia, but certain factors must be considered when using this type of monitor to ensure your reading is accurate.

How to get an accurate reading

When you're taking a reading with your mobile heart rhythm monitor certain issues can present themselves. For instance, the recording must be made while the arrhythmia is occurring, otherwise, the reading could be displayed as completely normal. The general rule is to take a reading as soon as the arrhythmia is persistent, which helps the monitor get an accurate reading. If you are unable to get a proper reading with this type of heart rhythm monitor, your doctor may suggest a long-term monitor for more accurate results.

Long-term monitors

Long-term monitors fall within two different categories. They may be continuous recording (Holter) or intermittent recording. There is also an implantation monitor that differs in the way it's used. Instead of being worn or held for testing, it's implanted under the skin. The most advanced monitor is the smart Band-Aid, which is small, simple to use, and employs the most accurate tracking methods.

Holter Monitor

The Holter Monitor is a great choice for patients who need consistent monitoring or who have difficulty getting a proper reading for an intermittent device. This type of device records for 24-48 hours at a time, and transmits the data to a digital flash memory device. Once the information is uploaded to the flash drive it's put into a computer, which reads the information and analyzes it. ECG complexes are counted during the analysis, which helps calculate summary statistics such as your minimum and maximum heart rate throughout the day.

While this is a useful device, there is one disadvantage. If you don't have an arrhythmia occur within the 24-48 hour period of using the device, any data collected will be unless.

The Event Monitor

The event monitor can be used for 30 days or longer to record your heart's activity. This device is better for catching intermittent arrhythmia and offers patients and doctors a full-data analysis of your heart's rhythm over an extended period, which is essential for proper care. By performing long-term monitoring, your doctor can decide if your current treatment approach is an effective one or if there should be some alterations made to make your

treatment more effective.

Implantable ambulatory event monitors

These monitors are used for patients who require extensive monitoring over an extended time. This type of monitor is commonly used by patients who experience infrequent symptoms, which can be difficult to track. The device is implanted under the skin in the chest area during an outpatient surgical procedure and can stay in the area of implantation for about one year.

Next-generation “Smart Band-Aid”

The newest form of monitoring is found in the “smart Band-Aid,” which works by monitoring cardiac rhythm, beat for beat. This device is small in size, about that of an actual Band-Aid, but performs well beyond its size. The device has small sensors in it which can be modified to monitor several different tasks. They provide comprehensive data on post-symptoms, looping, and auto-trigger events.

Conclusion

Choosing the right device for your needs can be difficult without professional medical guidance. However, your doctor can suggest the best monitor for your needs by looking at various contributing factors.