



09 APR, 2020

## A Fluttering Heart isn't Normal

Travel 3SIXTY, Malaysia

# A Fluttering Heart isn't Normal



Dr Choy Chun Ngok

Your heart might start racing when you get excited or see your significant other, but if you feel your heart constantly fluttering for no apparent reason, you need to get it checked.

Dr Choy Chun Ngok, consultant cardiologist at Subang Jaya Medical Centre, says a constantly fluttering heart can be due to one of two often underdiagnosed heart diseases – atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter.

"A patient with atrial fibrillation or atrial flutter may experience 120 to 160 heartbeats per minute at rest, which is highly abnormal. Both diseases are constantly underdiagnosed as patients only discover them upon recovering from a complication, like a heart attack," says Dr Choy.

Dr Choy also adds that both diseases share the same symptoms: palpitations, fatigue and shortness of breath. However, the only difference between the two is the regularity of the pulse as the pulse for atrial fibrillation is always irregular



1. Health screenings could help your physician detect cardiac problems like atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter.
2. Exercise can help to reduce the risk of having atrial fibrillation.

while the pulse for atrial flutter can either be regular or irregular.

Dr Choy says atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter would usually not cause sudden death, unlike a heart attack, but both conditions will weaken your heart because of over-usage of the heart muscles. He illustrates this as your heart being on overdrive for a prolonged period of time.

Among the risk factors that can trigger both atrial fibrillation and atrial flutter are hypertension, excessive consumption of alcohol, drug use and recent heart surgery. However, there are some cases where patients who lead healthy lifestyles develop atrial fibrillation or atrial flutter. These cases could be due to hereditary heart diseases or other conditions that were previously unknown to the patient, like an abnormal heart valve.

To treat these diseases, blood-thinning medication called anticoagulants are usually prescribed. However, if the conditions persist, an invasive procedure is sometimes an option. This surgery is called ablation and uses radiofrequency energy or a freezing balloon called a cryoballoon to break down the area of the heart that is causing the abnormal heart rhythm.

Dr Choy stresses that while these diseases are difficult to prevent in the first place, the risk of developing them can be reduced with adoption of a healthy lifestyle. He advises, "Always exercise, practise a healthy diet and avoid consuming excessive amounts of alcohol. A fluttering heart doesn't always mean you're in love."

For more information, call +603-5639 1212.

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### SUMMARIES

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