Atrial Fibrillation Medications That Slow the Heart Rate

Atrial fibrillation, or AFib, is the most common heart rhythm problem (arrhythmia). Medications, along with lifestyle changes, play a vital role in managing AFib.

Medications can:

- Keep the heart from beating too fast (rate control medications)
- Get the heart back to a normal rhythm and help keep it there (rhythm control medications)
- Help prevent a stroke, which is more common with AFib (anticoagulants or blood thinners)

Examples include:
- Beta blockers (like metoprolol or carvedilol)
- Calcium channel blockers (like diltiazem or verapamil)
- Digoxin, in some cases

These medications also are used to treat other heart conditions.
- Sometimes, these drugs aren’t enough to control AFib.
- In some cases, taking both a rate and rhythm control medicine might be needed.

Rate control medications slow the speed of the heart's beats. They’ve been around for a long time and are generally safe.

Things to keep in mind:

- Talk about common side effects:
  - Drop in blood pressure
  - Tiredness, low energy
  - Dizziness

- Finding the right medicine and dose (amount) often takes some time, so stick with it.
- Make a plan to monitor your heart rate and ask what your rate should be.

Visit CardioSmart.org/AFib to learn more.
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