Atrial Fibrillation Medications That Control Rhythm

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)

Zeroing in on rhythm control medications as one option
- They help restore and maintain a normal rhythm.
- Examples include sotalol, flecainide, propafenone, dronedarone, dofetilide and amiodarone.
- More often used in people who:
  - Know when they are “in” AFib or don’t feel well with AFib
  - Have other heart conditions
  - Continue having a fast heart rate despite medication
  - Are waiting to have an ablation (procedure to restore and maintain rhythm)

Things to keep in mind

Some rhythm control medications:
- Require regular blood work and other tests.
- May cause new heart rhythm problems.
- Need to be started in the hospital to see if they work and are safe.
- Sometimes are used along with a cardioversion or ablation.

As with any medications, there can be side effects. Ask questions and always share concerns with your care team.

Visit CardioSmart.org/AFib to learn more.
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