



American Heart Association.

EmPOWERED to Serve™

Learn AFib by Heart

LESSON PLAN

Call to Action

Learn the signs of atrial fibrillation (AFib) — know how you can act and adapt to reduce stroke risk.

Community Need

Atrial fibrillation (AFib) is the most common type of irregular heartbeat. Normally, a heart contracts and relaxes to a regular beat. Certain cells in the heart make electric signals that cause the heart to pump blood. In atrial fibrillation (AFib or AF), the heart's two small upper chambers (atria) don't beat the way they should. Instead of beating in a normal pattern, the atria "quiver" or "flutter". They beat irregularly and too fast. This causes blood flow to be slow and can cause blood clots, which can lead to stroke. It is important for the heart to pump properly so your body gets the oxygen and food it needs. AFib is on the rise nationwide, but some groups are less likely to be aware they have the condition:

- It is estimated that 12.1 million people in the United States will have AFib in 2030.
- The number of adults developing AFib increases markedly with older age.
- In a national study, Blacks were approximately one-third less likely than whites to be aware they had AFib.

Most people who have AFib are unaware of their increased risk, especially for stroke:

- A person with AFib is at five times higher stroke risk.
- Strokes caused by AFib are more severe than strokes from other causes.
- A person with AFib is at higher risk for heart failure.

You can live with AFib, but it can lead to other problems, work with your health care professional to manage your AFib and lower your risk of complications.



Three Important Points

Our lives are busy, and many of us are on “information overload.” That’s why we focus on three key health messages:

- Learn about atrial fibrillation (AFib) – signs, symptoms and increased stroke risk.
- Talk to your health care professional – learn how AFib can increase stroke risk.
- Live with AFib – reduce your stroke risk.

EmPOWERED to Serve Health Check

(Note: The EmPOWERED to Serve Health Check is not a screening for atrial fibrillation. For heart health screenings, please see your health care professional.)

The EmPOWERED to Serve Health Check is a way for community members to learn about their blood pressure and weight. The goal is to get at least 15 percent of your community organization checking these health measures, and with the information in hand, to complete the [My Life Check](#)[®] personal health assessment.

There are many ways you can conduct this optional EmPOWERED to Serve Health Check:

- Before the program, ask participants to check their blood pressure and weight at home or at their doctor’s office.
- Provide a scale and blood pressure machine on site. Ask participants to check their weight and blood pressure before the program gets under way.
- Invite a local health care professional or partner with a health care organization to check blood pressure and weight for participants at the start of the program.
- If you can host a screening, try to offer blood glucose and cholesterol checks, too.

Length of Lesson

- Budget 1 – 1 ½ hours to present the lesson.
- If you are conducting a Health Check, add 20 minutes or more before the meeting for participants to get their blood pressure and weight checked.



Lesson Materials

No Access to a Slide Projector? Print out the slides and put them in a three-ring binder. Use the printed slides as a script to deliver your health lesson.

- Flip chart and markers
- Handouts (See resource list. Download and make one copy per participant.):
 - [Partnering in Your Treatment](#)
 - [FAQ About AFib](#)
 - [AFib Symptom Tracker](#)
 - [Food Diary](#)
 - [Medication Log](#)
 - [Let's Talk About Stroke, TIA and Warning Signs](#)
- Pens
- Goody bags: Reach out to local hospitals, wellness centers, clinics and other health organizations. Ask them about donating giveaways for participants. Also check out the American Heart Association store (shop.heart.org) for brochures to buy in bulk.

Audiovisual Needs

- Projector for PowerPoint slides.
- Internet connection (optional).

Wrap-Up

Reminder! After the lesson, encourage participants to visit EmPOWEREDtoServe.org and sign up to become an ambassador and learn how you can be a part of the movement!



Slide Program with Talking Points and Discussion Questions

The “Notes” section of the PowerPoint slides may include scripted comments for the lesson. Use this to help walk through the lesson. To engage participants, the talking points also include potential discussion questions. For your reference, below is a list of these questions:

- Do you know anyone who has atrial fibrillation, also known as AFib?
- Does anyone know what causes AFib?
- What are the signs and symptoms of AFib?
- If you or someone you know has AFib symptoms and signs, what should you do?
- Does anyone know what causes a stroke?
- What are the warning signs of stroke?
- Let’s do a shoutout. The warning signs of a stroke are F.A.S.T.
 - F for _____. A for _____. S for _____. T for _____.
 - Answers
 - F** Face drooping – Does one side of the face droop or is it numb? Ask the person to smile. Is the person's smile uneven?
 - A** Arm weakness – Is one arm weak or numb? Ask the person to raise both arms. Does one arm drift downward?
 - S** Speech difficulty – Is speech slurred? Is the person unable to speak or hard to understand? Ask the person to repeat a simple sentence, like “The sky is blue.” Is the sentence repeated correctly?
 - T** Time to call 9-1-1 – If someone shows any of these symptoms, even if the symptoms go away, call 9-1-1 and get the person to the hospital immediately. Check the time, so you'll know when the first symptoms appeared.
- If someone has the F.A.S.T. warning signs, what should you do?
- Have you heard of Life’s Simple 7?
- Do you try to live by Life’s Simple 7?
- If you were to experience AFib symptoms, would you feel well-prepared to speak to your health care professional?
- How can you spread the word about AFib in your community?