

**An arrhythmia** is an abnormal heartbeat that may be unusually fast ( tachycardia ) or unusually slow ( bradycardia ) It may be related to a previous heart condition (e.g., damage from a heart attack ) or to other factors (e.g., coffee, stress or medications).

In the majority of cases, a skipped beat is not medically significant. The most serious arrhythmias, however, contribute to a big number of death deaths and with annual deaths attributable to the condition rising steadily. Also, one type of arrhythmia ventricular fibrillation causes most of the sudden cardiac death . (from **cardiac arrest** ) that occur each year.

Diagnosing an arrhythmia is very important, because the longer an arrhythmia lasts without detection or treatment, the greater the chances of permanent damage and additional heart dysfunction. Diagnosis may be done through **noninvasive** tests such as an **ECG** (electrocardiogram) in a doctors surgery or increasingly in your own home

Most non-sustained (temporary) arrhythmias need no treatment (other than lifestyle changes, perhaps).