

Supraventricular Tachycardia: What You Should Know

What is supraventricular tachycardia?

Supraventricular tachycardia (SOO-prah-ven-TRIK-u-lar tak-eh-KAR-dee-ah), or SVT, is a condition that causes your heart to beat faster than it should. Bouts of SVT are often short.

What are the symptoms?

You might feel fluttering or tightness in your chest. You may also be short of breath or dizzy. The symptoms of SVT are like symptoms of anxiety, so talk to your doctor to be sure you get the right diagnosis. Call your doctor right away if your symptoms last longer than a few minutes, you have them a lot, or you get new ones. If you think you may pass out, go to the emergency room.

How is it diagnosed?

SVT is usually diagnosed using a test called an electrocardiogram, or ECG. It can be done in your doctor's office or a hospital. The ECG may not show SVT if your heart is beating normally when you have the test. Your doctor might record your heartbeat over a few days with a monitor you take home.

How is it treated?

When you have a bout of SVT and your heart is beating too fast, your doctor might ask you to hold your breath and strain like you are trying to have a bowel movement. Or your doctor might ask you to put your face in ice water. Sometimes these things alone slow your heartbeat. But you may need medicine or an electric shock to get it back to normal.

Can I prevent more SVT episodes?

If you have SVT, you should stop or limit your use of alcohol, tobacco, caffeine, and street drugs. These may trigger SVT.

Where can I get more information?

Your doctor

American Heart Association

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/arrhythmia/about-arrhythmia/tachycardia--fast-heart-rate>

MedlinePlus

<https://medlineplus.gov/arrhythmia.html>

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