

Ectopic Atrial Tachycardia

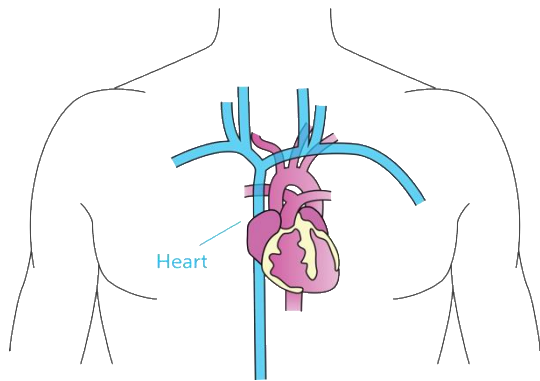
This sheet explains what ectopic atrial tachycardia (EAT) is, its symptoms and treatment options.

Key points

- Ectopic atrial tachycardia (EAT) is a fast, abnormal heart rhythm.
- We often treat it with medication or an electrophysiology (EP) study with catheter ablation.

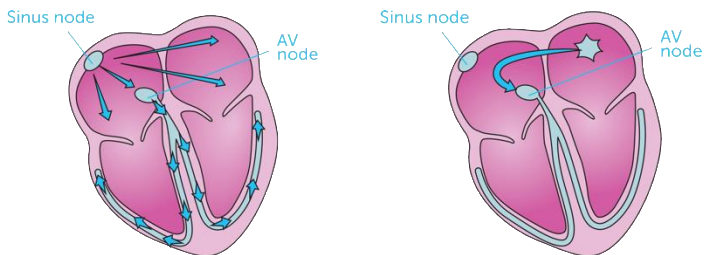
What is ectopic atrial tachycardia?

Ectopic atrial tachycardia is an abnormal, fast heart rhythm coming from the top chambers of the heart.



Normal Sinus Rhythm

Ectopic Atrial Tachycardia



(blue arrows = direction of heart rhythm)

What causes it?

- The normal heartbeat starts in a structure called the sinus node, which is responsible for making sure your child's heart beats at a steady pace.
- EAT happens when the heartbeat starts outside of the sinus node and in the heart's top chambers instead.
- People who had surgery for congenital heart disease (CHD) are at a higher risk of ectopic atrial tachycardia.
- EAT can also be found in healthy hearts.

How is EAT diagnosed?

- We may do an electrocardiogram (EKG or ECG), a test that measures how fast and strong your child's heart is beating. Or, we may give you a device you can use at home, like a Holter monitor or smartphone app.
- EAT can weaken the heart muscle over time. We may see this on an echocardiogram (ultrasound of the heart).

What are the symptoms of EAT?

- The most common symptom is a heart rhythm that feels much faster than usual. This symptom may come and go or happen all the time.
- Some people have no symptoms. Your doctor may notice it during a routine visit.

How is EAT treated?

- **Medications:** We use these to slow down the fast heartbeat or decrease how often it happens.
- **An electrophysiology (EP) study with catheter ablation:** This is when we put thin, bendable tubes (called catheters) into large blood vessels, often in the groin. These tubes go into the heart to find and treat the rhythm that's not normal. Most people spend a night in the hospital after this procedure.

What side effects can EAT cause?

- Trouble breathing
- Chest pain
- Dizziness
- Fainting (passing out): This is rare. Sitting or lying down when you feel the fast heartbeat can help.
- Weakened heart muscle: This usually goes back to normal once we treat your child's EAT.

What should I do in an emergency?

- Take your child to the emergency room if your child:
 - **Has symptoms of weakened heart muscle**, like:
 - Fast breathing or trouble breathing
 - Difficulty with feeds, if your child is an infant
 - Poor weight gain, if your child is an infant
 - Feeling more tired than usual
 - Fainting or nearly fainting
 - **A fast heartbeat for 30 minutes or more.** Your child may need medications or other treatments.

What does having EAT mean for the future?

- EAT can sometimes go away on its own over time. This is especially the case in children younger than age 1. It may also go away on its own if it started soon after your child's heart surgery.
- Medications or catheter ablation are effective and safe treatments that reduce how often EAT happens.

Contact us

- **For routine questions Monday-Friday, 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.:** Please call the Cardiology clinic at 617-355-2079.
- **For urgent issues after hours and on holidays or weekends:** Page the Electrophysiology doctor on call at 617-355-6369 pager #3737.