

Department of Cardiology

Atrial fibrillation virtual ward

Information for patients, relatives and carers

Introduction

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a common heart rhythm condition. It can cause your heart rhythm to become irregular and your heart rate to become fast. When this happens, you might feel unwell and having the following symptoms:

- palpitations: a sensation of your heart beating quickly, beating irregularly, skipping beats or feeling more aware of your heart rate and rhythm than normal
- breathlessness: you may feel like it's hard to catch your breath or like you're out of breath more often than usual
- dizziness and fainting
- chest pain
- tiredness

AF can be managed by:

- medications or tablets to control your heart rate and rhythm
- medication to thin your blood (anticoagulation): AF is associated with a risk of stroke. This means blood thinning is recommended unless there is a very strong reason or risk to not start blood thinning
- sometimes, patients may have other procedures such as electrical cardioversion or an AF catheter ablation, to try and cure the AF completely

What is the AF virtual ward?

After you have been in hospital with AF, it may be possible to continue management of your heart rate and rhythm at home. This service is a safe way to monitor you for one to two weeks following discharge from hospital. The service uses a smartphone app to do this. It allows you to report your heart rate, rhythm and symptoms if you have any.

The decision to continue monitoring you on the AF virtual ward has been made by the doctors looking after you during your hospital stay.

The AF virtual ward service allows people to return home sooner for ongoing monitoring of their heart rate and rhythm, rather than having to remain in hospital. There are important criteria to ensure discharge from hospital to the AF virtual ward is safe. Sometimes, if you become unwell at home, you may need to return to hospital to be assessed by a doctor.

The AF virtual ward:

- is run via the North West London virtual hospital (virtual hospital) This is **open 08.00 to 20.00 daily, and contactable on 020 3704 3704**
- needs you to have a working email address and a smartphone
- involves you measuring your heart rate and rhythm at home and submitting these measurements twice a day. You can find a guide to submitting measurements on page 5

You should make your measurements twice a day during your AF virtual ward admission:

- submit your morning measurement between 09.00 and 10.00
- submit your afternoon measurement between 16.00 and 17.00
- if you experience symptoms when you take your twice-daily heart rate measurements, make sure to click on the 'symptom' tab on your heart rate and rhythm app to describe how you're feeling

The team at the virtual hospital, including consultants, will review your twice-daily measurements and symptoms and contact you if further action is needed. If you feel unwell outside of your twice-daily measurements, you may wish to submit an extra symptom and heart rate and rhythm recording.

Please be aware the virtual hospital is not a 24/7 service. If you need urgent or emergency help, call 111 or 999.

Joining the AF virtual ward

1. **Referral to AF virtual ward:** your hospital team have decided it is safe for you to return home with continued monitoring via the AF virtual ward. They will organise this while you are still in hospital and provide guidance on next steps.
2. **Downloading the heart rate and rhythm and symptom app:** you use this app to submit your heart rate, rhythm and symptoms. Download it onto your smartphone, or one belonging to somebody living with you. Please download the app before you leave hospital – the icon is shown on the top left of page 5.
3. **Registration to the AF virtual ward:** registration will be completed while you are still in hospital. You need to have the heart rate and rhythm app downloaded onto your smartphone to complete registration.
4. **Learning how to take a heart rate and rhythm measurement:** if needed, you will be shown how to take a recording by staff before you leave the hospital. See page 5.
5. **Discharge from hospital to your home:** you will be able to go home once you have been registered on the virtual hospital AF ward, your app has downloaded, and you have been shown how to take a recording. Your monitoring period on the AF virtual ward now begins.

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6. **Medications:** the hospital team will send you home with enough of your medications. Extra doses may be provided, so that your medication can be altered during your AF virtual ward admission. Do not take any extra medications or doses unless advised by a doctor or nurse.
 7. **Outpatient plans:** some patients require outpatient appointments with cardiology. This will be arranged by the doctors caring for you in hospital.
 - **Your monitoring period on the AF virtual ward:** This begins once you leave hospital. Some patients will be monitored for a week only, if their symptoms and heart rate and rhythm measurements are stable.

Some people may require two weeks of monitoring. This includes:

- twice-daily submissions of heart rate and rhythm and your symptoms
- potential changes to your medications
- potential urgent readmission to hospital if you need to be assessed by a doctor

End of your monitoring period on the AF virtual ward

The virtual hospital will telephone you at the end of your monitoring period on the AF virtual ward

They will let you know that your remote monitoring period has ended, and what further clinical management is planned. They will provide you and your GP with a discharge summary, to confirm details of your AF virtual ward admission and ongoing plans.

See page 4 for the traffic light system: keeping you safe.

The traffic light system: keeping you safe

Use the traffic lights to help you decide what help you might need, and when.

Your health and safety are the most important thing, so please remember:

- the virtual hospital is not monitored 24/7.
- **the virtual hospital is open 08.00 to 20.00 daily, 7 days a week: 0203 7043704.**

If you or your loved one is unwell and needs medical attention, call 111 or 999 for urgent or emergency assistance.

GREEN: your heart rate is between 60 and 110 beats per minute (bpm), and you do not have annoying symptoms

- you feel well, and your heart rate is 60 to 110 bpm
- you may be aware of palpitations (your heartbeat), but these do not make you feel unwell

What to do: continue to submit your twice-daily measurements.

AMBER: your heart rate is between 50 and 60 bpm, or 110 and 120bpm for 2 or more consecutive measurements. You don't feel worse than when you left hospital

- though you may be slightly breathless, tired, or dizzy, this is not worse than how you felt when you were discharged from hospital

What to do:

- you can contact the virtual hospital between 08.00 to 20.00, 7 days a week. continue to submit your measurements. The virtual hospital team will contact you during working hours when they review your measurements
- remember this is not a 24/7 service: if your symptoms worsen and you are worried, seek urgent or emergency medical advice via 111 or 999

RED: your heart rate is below 50 bpm, or above 120 bpm and you do not feel well

- your symptoms are not mild, and you feel unwell
- you need medical assessment or review

What to do:

- 08.00 to 20.00 – call the virtual hospital on 0203 704 3704
- outside these working hours, call your GP, 111 or 999 depending how unwell you feel
- in an emergency, always call 999 or go to A&E

How to take your heart rate and rhythm measurement

STEP 01 Click on the Ortus iHealth icon to open the app

STEP 02 Click on the ECG Detection option to begin the measurement.

STEP 03 Carefully Read the Instructions. Select **Next** to proceed.

STEP 04 Please answer if you are experiencing any complaints. Continue by selecting "Yes" or "No" and then select **Next**.

STEP 05 Test your volume. Please click "Test volume" and adjust the volume so you can clearly hear the instructions. Once done select **Next**.

STEP 06 The application will ask for your permission to access your camera.. Please select **Next**. On the pop - up select **OK**.

STEP 07 Please listen carefully to the instructions given. A short video will be played to guide you on performing a measurement.

STEP 08 After selecting **Start** your flash will illuminate. There is a circle on the screen to help locate finger placement on the camera lens.

STEP 09 Once your finger is detected, place your phone with the screen facing down on the table to begin measurement

STEP 10 The measurement will automatically start. Please stay in this position and carefully listen to the voice guidance.

STEP 11 The voice guidance will prompt you when your measurement is complete. Select **Next** or **Done** to continue

STEP 12 Your data has been saved successfully. To review ECG report, Go to Reports section on the home screen and Press ECG

How do I make a comment about my visit?

We aim to provide the best possible service and staff will be happy to answer any of the questions you may have. If you have any **suggestions** or **comments** about your visit, please either speak to a member of staff or contact the patient advice and liaison service (**PALS**) on **020 3312 7777** (10.00 – 16.00, Monday to Friday). You can also email PALS at imperial.pals@nhs.net The PALS team will listen to your concerns, suggestions or queries and is often able to help solve problems on your behalf.

Alternatively, you may wish to complain by contacting our complaints department:

Complaints department, fourth floor, Salton House, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street
London W2 1NY

Email: ICHC-tr.Complaints@nhs.net

Telephone: **020 3312 1337 / 1349**

Alternative formats

This leaflet can be provided on request in large print or easy read, as a sound recording, in Braille or in alternative languages. Please email the communications team:
imperial.communications@nhs.net

Wi-fi

Wi-fi is available at our Trust. For more information visit our website: www.imperial.nhs.uk

Department of Cardiology
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