Daiichi-Sankyo

Nutrition guidance for people living with atrial fibrillation



Important information:†

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This material is intended for educational purposes only and is based on available scientific evidence on atrial fibrillation and nutrition as reviewed by the ENHA. It includes expert opinions by the ENHA grounded in evidence-informed clinical dietetic practice that supports the translation of scientific evidence into patient-friendly actions. It provides general information and does not replace professional medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

The diagnosis and treatment of medical conditions are the responsibility of healthcare professionals. For questions regarding your specific treatment situation, please consult your doctor.

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What is atrial fibrillation?

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a heart rhythm condition where the heart beats irregularly and sometimes faster than normal. Atrial fibrillation can increase the risk of stroke, and it is the most common heart rhythm irregularity worldwide.[1]

Why nutrition matters in AF

Mindful everyday food and drink choices can support heart and blood vessel health and help manage blood pressure, weight and blood sugar as part of atrial fibrillation management alongside prescribed medication.[2,3]



Heart-healthy dietary pattern



There is no specific “AF diet”

Research has not identified one specific diet that lowers the risk for atrial fibrillation.[3] However, adopting overall heart-healthy eating patterns is recommended to support cardiovascular health.[2,4,5]

Overall, a balanced and varied diet that provides the nutrients you need, together with moderation and consistency, can support a healthy eating pattern.[6,†]

Aim for a Mediterranean-style eating pattern which benefits heart health and emphasises:[2,4,7,†]

- **Vegetables and fruits**
- **Whole-grains** (e.g., oats and brown rice) and whole-grain products
- **Beans, lentils, chickpeas and nuts**
- **Fish** (especially oily fish, e.g., salmon, mackerel, tuna, sardine, herring, trout)
- **Olive oil as the main fat source**

In addition, lean towards choosing fresh foods more often and limiting ultra-processed foods.*[,3,4]

**Ultra-processed foods include packaged snacks, sugary drinks, sweets and confectionery, instant or ready meals.*

Myths and facts on AF and nutrition







Myths

01

"A specific food and/or drink caused my AF."

Facts

AF typically arises from a combination of modifiable and non-modifiable risk factors, including:[1,8]

> High blood pressure
> Underlying cardiovascular disease (e.g., heart failure, coronary artery disease, heart valve disease or a previous heart attack)
> Increasing age
> Overweight and obesity
> Diabetes
> Family history and genetics

02

"A specific food and/or drink triggered my AF symptoms."

AF episodes could be triggered by certain foods in some individuals, but there is no single "AF diet trigger" that affects everyone.† Personal sensitivity plays an important role, and focusing on overall heart health is essential.[2,4,8]

03

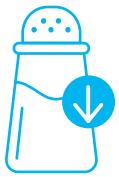
"A specific food and/or drink can cure my AF."

Atrial fibrillation cannot be cured by food or drink consumption, nevertheless heart-healthy dietary patterns may support AF management alongside prescribed medication therapy.[2,4]

Key dietary pillars in AF

Reduce Salt *(Sodium)*

Too much salt in your diet can raise your blood pressure, which is an important risk factor for AF.[2]



Practical tips:[9,†]

- Check sodium on food labels and choose lower-sodium options
- Taste food before adding salt
- Use herbs and spices for flavour
- Limit processed foods

Caffeine – *Monitor what works for you*

Current evidence does not support routine caffeine restriction for most people with AF.[10] It is rather important to monitor your individual response and avoid excessive consumption.[4]



If caffeine triggers your symptoms:[†]

- Consider reducing your intake.[2] Caffeine is also found in tea*, energy drinks, cola and other carbonated soft drinks
- Choose decaffeinated coffee and tea
- Try caffeine-free herbal teas (e.g., chamomile, peppermint, rooibos)

Alcohol – *Less is better*



Alcohol intake is associated with increased AF risk, with higher consumption linked to higher risk.[1,3]

- Reducing or avoiding alcohol may help lower AF burden while lessening its symptoms and progression[1,3]

Stay hydrated

Staying well hydrated supports normal body function and may help avoid electrolyte imbalances that could contribute to palpitations.[11,12,13]



Recommendations:[†]

- Drink fluids regularly
- Increase intake in hot weather
- Be mindful if taking diuretics (“water tablets”)

Increase fibre

Fibre supports healthy cholesterol, blood sugar and pressure control, and weight management.[2,4,14,15]



Recommendations:[†]

Choose more often:

- Vegetables and fruits
- Whole-grain bread and pasta
- Oats
- Legumes (e.g., beans, lentils, chickpeas)
- Brown rice

Overall, small daily habits support long-term heart health.[†]

**Most black and green teas contain caffeine unless labelled “decaffeinated” or “herbal”.*

Medications and supplements

Anticoagulants and diet

Many people with AF take anticoagulants (also called “blood thinners”) to help prevent blood clots and thereby reduce the risk of stroke.[1]

If you take vitamin K antagonists:



Vitamin K affects how warfarin works – large day-to-day changes in vitamin K intake can make your blood-thinning levels unstable.[16]

Vitamin K-rich foods include:[17,18,†]

Spinach | Broccoli | Cabbage | Collard greens | Kale

- ✓ Vitamin K-rich foods do not need to be avoided completely; maintain a consistent intake from week to week.[19,†]
- ✓ Attend regular International Normalized Ratio (INR)* monitoring.[1]
- ✓ Consult the patient information leaflet of your medication for information on food interactions.

If you take DOACs:



Direct oral anticoagulants (DOACs) are not affected by vitamin K intake in the same way as vitamin K antagonists.[20]

Consult the patient information leaflet of your medication for information on food interactions.

**INR is a standardized blood test that measures how long it takes your blood to clot.*

Supplements and atrial fibrillation

Evidence for supplements including multivitamins, omega-3 fatty acid capsules, herbal products and foods often labelled as “superfoods*” (e.g., aloe vera) in AF remains limited and inconclusive.[2,21]



Some supplements may interact with anticoagulants or increase bleeding risk.[1,22,23]

Do not start supplements without medical advice.†



**Superfoods is a marketing term used to describe foods claimed to have high nutritional value or special health benefits. While many of these foods can be part of a healthy diet, no single food has been shown to cause, prevent or treat atrial fibrillation.*

Practical daily lifestyle tips

Salt awareness

Salt may be high in (but not limited to):[24,†]



- Processed meats (e.g., cold cuts and sausages)
- Savoury snacks
- Some breads (especially packaged or processed varieties)
- Condiments and sauces (e.g., soy sauce, ketchup)
- Some cheeses (particularly hard or processed types)
- Ready-made meals

Aim to have salty foods in moderation and choose lower-salt options when available.[9]

When cooking or eating out:[5,9,†]



- If possible, opt for grilled, baked or steamed foods instead of deep-fried options
- Choose healthier oils (e.g., olive oil) and consume them in moderate amounts
- Limit adding extra salt at the table or during cooking
- Ask for sauces on the side

Keeping a food and symptom diary:



If you notice possible triggers:[†]

- Write down what you eat and drink
- Record symptoms and timings
- Discuss patterns with your healthcare provider

Avoid making significant dietary changes without professional advice.[†]



Seeking professional advice and support†

A registered dietitian or related healthcare professional can help you:

- Personalise your nutrition plan
- Manage anticoagulation safely (e.g., vitamin K intake)
- Support healthy blood pressure and weight management
- Address diabetes or cholesterol concerns

With the right support, you can take positive steps towards better health by building sustainable, healthy eating habits.

If you have any questions or concerns, or if you are unsure how this information applies to you, please speak with your doctor or other healthcare professional.

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