

Atrial fibrillation, also known as AFib or AF, is an irregular and often rapid heartbeat (arrhythmia) in which the heart's two upper chambers (the atria) beat irregularly and out of coordination with the two lower chambers (the ventricles) of the heart.

AFib may happen in brief episodes, or it may be a permanent condition.

Types of Atrial fibrillation

- **Paroxysmal (I48.0)**. Symptoms come and go, usually lasting for a few minutes to hours. Sometimes symptoms occur for as long as a week, and episodes can happen repeatedly.
- **Persistent (I48.19)**. With this type of atrial fibrillation, the heart rhythm doesn't go back to normal on its own. The patient will need treatment such as an electrical shock or medications to restore the heart rhythm.
- **Longstanding persistent (I48.11)**. This type of atrial fibrillation is continuous and lasts longer than 12 months.
- **Permanent (I48.21)**. In this type of atrial fibrillation, the abnormal heart rhythm can't be restored. The patient often requires medications to control the heart rate and to prevent blood clots.

Signs and Symptoms

It can be asymptomatic. However, some people may experience one or more of the following symptoms:

- Irregular heartbeat
- Heart palpitations (rapid, fluttering, or pounding)
- Lightheadedness
- Extreme fatigue
- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain

Risk factors

- Advancing age
- High blood pressure
- Obesity
- European ancestry
- Diabetes
- Heart failure
- Ischemic heart disease
- Hyperthyroidism
- Chronic kidney disease
- Moderate to heavy alcohol use
- Smoking
- Enlargement of the chambers on the left side of the heart

Complications

Sometimes atrial fibrillation can lead to the following complications:

- **Stroke**. In atrial fibrillation, the chaotic rhythm may cause blood to pool in your heart's upper chambers (atria) and form clots. If a blood clot forms, it could dislodge from the heart and travel to the brain. There it might block blood flow, causing a stroke.
- **Heart failure**. Atrial fibrillation, especially if not controlled, may weaken the heart and lead to heart failure, a condition in which the heart can't circulate enough blood to meet body's needs.

Diagnostics test

- Medical history and physical exam
- Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG). **It's a primary tool for diagnosing atrial fibrillation.**
- Holter monitor
- Cardiac event recording

- Echocardiogram
- Blood tests (to check for metabolic problems or substances in the blood that can cause atrial fibrillation)
- Chest X-ray (to monitor for complications, such as fluid buildup in the lungs, or to check for other conditions that may be responsible for signs and symptoms)

Treatment

- **Reset the rhythm or control the rate**
 - **Electrical cardioversion.** In this brief procedure, an electrical shock is delivered to your heart through paddles or patches placed on your chest. The shock stops your heart's electrical activity for a short moment. The goal is to reset your heart's normal rhythm
 - **Cardioversion with drugs.** This form of cardioversion uses medications called anti-arrhythmics to help restore normal sinus rhythm.
 - **Pacemaker implantation**
- **Prevent blood clots** using blood thinner medication, which may decrease the risk of a stroke.
- **Surgical procedures called Maze.** It is a procedure that creates a scar tissue pattern in the heart (Since scar tissue does not conduct electricity, the abnormal electrical impulses causing the problem are disrupted.)

Clinical Documentation and Coding Tips

- Always document it to the highest level of specificity
- SOAP Notes documentation tips:
 - **Subjective** – Document the presence or absence of any current symptoms related to atrial fibrillation.
 - **Objective** – Document signs and symptoms and labs/test results related to AFib present at the time of the visit. (such as “irregularly irregular” rhythm or increased heart rate, EKG results).
 - **Assessment** – Document diagnostic

statements that are compatible with the ICD-10 nomenclature to the highest specificity.

- **Plan** – Document and link all medications used to treat the AFib. Detail any referrals, consultations, labs, or diagnostic testing requested.

Medicare Hierarchal Condition Categories (HCC)

Hierarchical condition category (HCC) coding is a risk-adjustment model designed to estimate future health care costs for patients. This model filters ICD-10CM codes into diagnosis groups (DxGs), and then into Conditions Categories (CCs). Hierarchies or families are placed to gain an HCC numeric code, which translates to a risk adjustment factor (RAF) value. Each diagnosis code found in the model, as a stand-alone diagnosis code or within a family or hierarchy, carries a value through RAF, but this value can change if the patient has other influencing factors such as ESRD, hospice, or are dual-eligible. Families or hierarchies set a value based on severity of illness, with more severe diagnoses carrying the overall risk score for that family. Diagnoses within families or hierarchies are inclusive of one another, while any additional diagnoses from other hierarchies or stand-alone diagnoses are additive and increase each patient's overall risk score.

Atrial Fibrillation is a chronic condition that falls within the category “Specified Heart Arrhythmias” (HCC 96) with an average RAF Score of 0.295 and condition interaction with CHF. 18 stand-alone ICD-10 CM codes qualify for this HCC, and they do not belong to a family or hierarchy.

Coding AFib.

- There are six (6) ICD - 10CM applicable to code AFib.

ICD-10 Code	Code description
I48.0	Paroxysmal atrial fibrillation
I48.11	Longstanding persistent atrial fibrillation
I48.19	Other persistent atrial fibrillation
I48.20	Chronic atrial fibrillation, unspecified

I48.21 Permanent atrial fibrillation

I48.91 Unspecified atrial fibrillation

- Verify AFib is a current problem.
- Note the exact atrial fibrillation description.
- Follow the ICD-10 CM official coding guidelines and conventions.
- Select the correct ICD-10 CM code to the highest specificity.