



UK National  
Screening Committee

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# UK NSC screening for atrial fibrillation recommendation

Following a review of the evidence against strict criteria, the UK NSC does not currently recommend screening for atrial fibrillation in adults.

Atrial fibrillation (AF) is a heart condition. It causes an irregular heart rate that can sometimes be faster than normal. AF can increase the chance of having a stroke. There are 3 different types of AF. Different types of AF may have different risks for stroke.

Currently, people who have symptoms of AF should be offered a test to find out if they have the condition. Symptoms include breathing difficulties, chest discomfort and dizziness.

The aim of screening would be to find adults who do not know they have AF and may not have symptoms. They could then be treated to lower their chance of having a stroke.

## Key findings supporting the UK NSC recommendation

Although a study did show that screening could provide good value for money, the UK NSC could not recommend a national screening programme for atrial fibrillation because:

- it was unclear if the different types of AF have the same risk for stroke
- no evidence was found on how well treatment works in people with AF found through screening
- no evidence was found on whether screening is better than the current approach

A large research project in the UK is starting to try to find out if screening is more effective than what the current situation is for people with AF. This will help the UK NSC understand more about the benefits and harms of screening.

The UK NSC regularly reviews its recommendations on screening for different conditions in the light of new research evidence becoming available.

To find out more about the UK NSC's atrial fibrillation recommendation, please visit:

<https://legacyscreening.phe.org.uk/atrialfibrillation>

The UK National Screening Committee (UK NSC) advises ministers and the NHS in the 4 UK countries about all aspects of screening and supports implementation of screening programmes.

Find out more about the UK National Screening Committee at [www.gov.uk/uknsc](http://www.gov.uk/uknsc). The UK NSC evidence review process is described at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-nsc-evidence-review-process) and a list of all UK NSC recommendations can be found at [legacy.screening.nhs.uk/recommendations](http://legacy.screening.nhs.uk/recommendations)

The UK NSC secretariat is hosted by Public Health England ([www.gov.uk/phe](http://www.gov.uk/phe)).