

A SHORT GUIDE

Understanding Brugada Syndrome

What the condition is, what to look out for, and where to get help. Written in plain language for families, friends and anyone who wants to understand it.



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What is Brugada syndrome?

It is a rare, inherited condition that affects the electrical signalling of the heart. The heart itself is usually formed perfectly normally. It is the signal that travels through it that can go wrong.

Every heartbeat depends on tiny electrical currents moving through channels in the heart muscle. In Brugada syndrome one of those channels does not work as it should. Most of the time nothing happens.

Occasionally the rhythm can become dangerously fast, and if it does not correct itself the heart cannot pump properly.

Who it affects

It is inherited, so it runs in families. A parent with Brugada syndrome has roughly a one in two chance of passing it on. It is more often diagnosed in men, and symptoms most commonly appear in adulthood. Many people never have any symptoms at all.

What to look out for

Fainting without a clear cause, especially at rest, during sleep or with a fever. Gasping or irregular breathing at night. A racing or pounding heartbeat that comes from nowhere. And, importantly, a family history of unexplained sudden death, particularly in someone young.

Fever is a genuine trigger. A temperature should be brought down quickly, and advice sought if it does not settle.

How it is found

It is diagnosed with an ECG, a simple painless test that records the electrical activity of the heart. The pattern is not always visible, so a cardiologist may use a medication-provoked test to bring it out. Genetic testing may be offered where a gene change has been identified in the family.