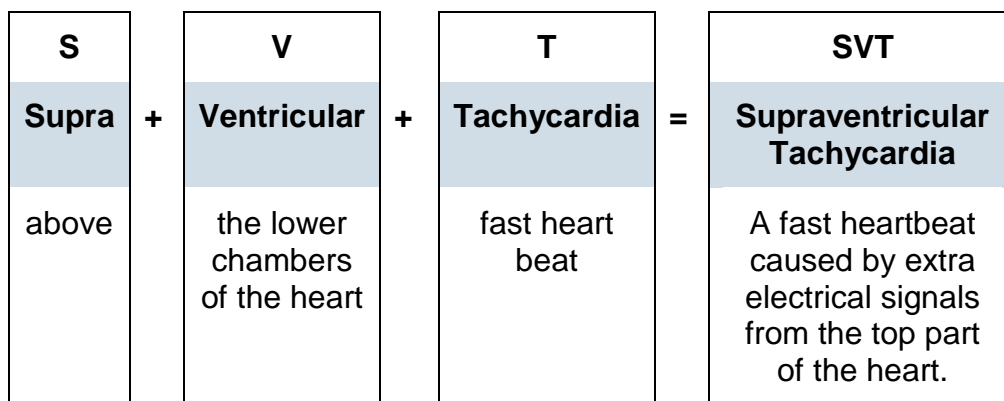


Slowing your racing heart

Information for children and teens with supraventricular tachycardia

What is supraventricular tachycardia?

Your heart beats rapidly from time to time. This is caused by extra electrical signals in your heart. The medical name for this is Supraventricular Tachycardia or SVT.



For most children and teens, a racing heart is not a life-threatening problem. Some children outgrow the problem; others may benefit from treatment.

What will make my heart beat return to normal?

You can learn how to slow your heart when it starts to beat fast. On the next page, we describe several ways to do this. These methods have been tried and tested with many patients and are safe to do.

If you have already found a way to stop the fast heart rate, please check with your health care provider if it is safe.

To slow a fast heart beat

When your heart starts beating fast, try one of these methods as soon as possible.

These methods always work better if you can lie down or sit comfortably and relax as much as possible.

Very deep breathing

Take an extremely deep breath - to the point where you cannot take in any more air, then exhale rapidly.

It is not enough to simply breathe deeply. You must take as deep a breath as you possibly can.

Valsalva maneuver

Take a medium sized breath and hold it in. Pinch your nose shut, close your mouth and strain down hard without exhaling. This will feel like you are trying to force a bowel movement. Keep straining as long as possible. Then, release the air and relax. This can make you feel lightheaded.

Cold on your face

There are several ways to put cold against your face:

- Fill a sink or a container with ice cold water. Take a deep breath, hold it and put your face into the cool water as long as possible.
- Place a bag of ice or frozen food (such as peas or corn) over your face.
- Splash cold water on your face or put a cold, wet facecloth over your face.

Gagging

Put a finger in the back of your throat to make yourself gag.

Cold drink

Drink a glass of something ice cold.

Getting the best results

Practicing these methods can lead to better results. Try each method at least twice before trying the next one.

Once you get good results with a particular method, try that one first when your heart starts beating fast.

Your health care

Keep a diary of your symptoms. Write down:

- when your heart races
- what you were doing at the time
- how long it lasts
- what worked to slow your heart

The health care team will review your symptom diary, give you information and advice about your activities, and recommend follow-up.

If your heart races often or the fast heart beat lasts a long time, you may need treatment, such as taking a medication to slow your heart or prevent a rapid heart beat. The team will decide the treatment that is best for you, based on your age, symptoms and test results.

You will need to know the name of your condition to be able to tell others about it.

When do I need to get medical help?

Have someone take you to the nearest hospital emergency room to have your heart checked if you have ANY of these problems:

- your heart has been racing for more than 20 minutes
- fainting
- you feel unwell or others are concerned about you

please turn over →

