

Video: Recognizing 'holiday heart'

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"Holiday heart" may sound like another joyous part of the holiday season.

"But, in the cardiology world, 'holiday heart' actually refers to this effect of the stress of too much alcohol, too much salt, higher blood pressure

on the heart," says Dr. Amy Pollak, a Mayo Clinic cardiologist.

Dr. Pollak says all that stress on the heart can cause an [irregular heartbeat](#) known as [atrial fibrillation](#).

"And, for some people, it feels like their heart is racing out of their chest," she says. "Their heart is just beating vigorously. For other folks, they just feel some irregularity—tired, short of breath, just wiped out, no energy."

Atrial [fibrillation](#) can lead to a stroke.

"So atrial fibrillation is something that is serious," Dr. Pollak says. "And so if you do feel that your heart is racing around the holidays, and it's not just from seeing someone underneath the mistletoe, but your heart is racing from, you know, irregularity, or you're feeling short of breath, any type of chest discomfort, overly fatigued, you really need to seek [medical attention](#)."

Dr. Pollak says the best way to avoid "holiday [heart](#)" is to avoid the excesses that are so prevalent during the holidays. She says that doesn't mean you have to skip a holiday party. Just skip some of the booze, cups of coffee and adding salt on your food.

Provided by Mayo Clinic

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