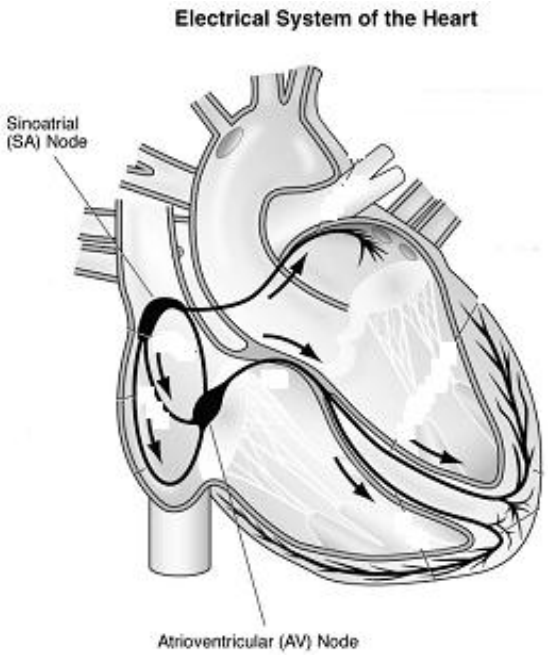
Premature Ventricular Contractions (PVC) and Premature Atrial Contractions (PAC)

Normal Heart
The heart is an electrical pump. The sinoatrial node (SA) controls the heart rate. The SA node fires and the atria (heart) contracts. The atrioventricular (AV) node then collects this impulse and sends it to the lower chambers of the heart to contract.



In premature ventricular contractions (PVC), there is a place of electricity in the lower chambers of the heart (ventricles). This causes an early heartbeat before the SA node would send a signal.

In premature atrial contractions (PAC), there is a spot of electricity in the upper chambers of the heart. This causes an early heartbeat before the SA node would send a signal.

Signs and Symptoms
You may feel like your heart skips or misses a beat. You may feel forceful heartbeats. Others may not feel these extra beats. You may find that stress, caffeine, alcohol, or certain medicines increase how often the extra heartbeats occur.

Testing
A member of the health care team will do a complete exam and a health history.

You may have an electrocardiogram (ECG) to look at the heart's electric activity. You may need a Holter monitor to tell us how often these extra beats occur. You wear the Holter for 24 or 48 hours. It records every heartbeat during that time. You would need an event monitor for 30 days to find out what the heart rhythm is when you have symptoms. You push a button when you feel an abnormal heartbeat.

Sometimes, you need an exercise test to find out if the extra heartbeats occur more or less often during exercise.

Treatment
If the extra heart beats do not cause any distress and do not happen often, then no treatment is needed. If you are bothered by the extra heartbeats, we may give you medicine to help.

When to Call
Call your health care team with any questions or concerns.

Who to Call
Pediatric Cardiology
(608) 263-6420

Adult Congenital Heart Disease
(608) 890-5700

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 3/2020. University of Wisconsin Hospital and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6860