**HOW SERIOUS ARE PALPITATONS?**

If you notice your heartbeat is

* very fast
* pounding or thumping
* irregular, with skipped or extra beats
* fluttering

then you are having palpitations.

Palpitations can be caused by

* stress or anxiety
* lack of sleep
* alcohol, caffeine, nicotine or recreational drugs
* side effects of some medicines
* intense exercise.

Heart palpitations can last for seconds, minutes or longer. They are common and are not usually a sign of anything serious, and often don’t need to be treated.

However, you must see a GP if

* your palpitations keep coming back or are getting worse
* they last longer than a few minutes
* you have a heart condition
* you have a history of heart problems in your family,

because if the condition isn’t treated it can increase your risk of a stroke.

And if you have palpitations with chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, feeling faint or fainting, you need to dial 999 for an ambulance or go straight to your nearest A&E.

*Sent by Dr Virmani and Dr Bedi’s patient participation group*