

## Patient Information

# Premature Ventricular Contractions (PVCs)

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- PVCs, or premature ventricular contractions, are “extra” heart beats that start in the lower portion of the heart.
- Nearly all of the 100,000 heart beats that occur each day start from the top part of the heart (the atria) that holds the “pacemaker” cells, which establish the heart rate.
- The normal pathway is handing the signal one cell to the next, or top-to-bottom.
- Every heart cell has the ability to start a beat and PVC’s do just that, reversing the pathway from bottom-top.
- These are typically self-limiting and only treated if symptoms are bothersome. However, in some instances they may be reflective of underlying structural disease.

### SYMPTOMS

- Patients typically described “skipped beats” or palpitations.
- They can cause lightheadedness, “passing out” spells and/or chest discomfort

### DIAGNOSTIC TESTS

- Physical exam, EKG or Holter monitoring

### TREATMENT

- The first step is to find out how many are occurring.
- An ultrasound is typically obtained to rule out structural heart disease.
- If bothersome, try to identify and remove possible triggers (caffeine, alcohol, stress, tobacco, energy drinks and some inhalers.)
- Beta blocker medicines are the treatment of choice for most cases.
- In very rare instances more aggressive medications or ablations are necessary.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION** or to make an appointment at URMC Cardiology at Highland Hospital, please call (585) 341-6780 or visit us online at [www.highlandheart.urmc.edu](http://www.highlandheart.urmc.edu)