

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- PVC
- Tips
- Mashed Potatoes
- Thanksgiving Diet

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## What is a PVC?

**What is a PVC?** A PVC is a premature ventricular contraction. This can also be called an “early” beat or a “skipped” beat. To understand what a PVC is, we first need to understand the normal conduction system of the heart. Your heart has two pacemakers. One is called the SA node and the other is called the AV node. The SA node is the driver and it starts the heart beat in the top part of the heart. As that signal comes down, the AV node acts as the gatekeeper and allows that normal heartbeat to travel to the bottom chambers of the heart (the ventricles). So the top chambers of the heart beat (the atria) and then the bottom chambers (the ventricles) beat. This entire cycle makes up one heartbeat. When there is a PVC, there is a place in one of the ventricles that thinks it is the



pacemaker of the heart. When it beats, the electrical cycle is interrupted so the heart may not get a full contraction. Sometimes the heart resets itself after this PVC and the normal conduction resumes itself. This is why some people feel as though their heart is “skipping” a beat because there is a short pause while the heart resets itself. Other people may feel a flutter sensation or a flip flop in the chest.

**What are the symptoms of PVCs?** Symptoms may include palpitations, chest pain, shortness of breath and lightheadedness.

**What causes PVCs?** PVCs occur more as we age and also occur more in males. Electrolyte imbalance can be a

common cause, such as low potassium. Excessive use of tobacco, caffeine, and alcohol can also cause PVCs. Certain medications, especially stimulants, can cause them. Any type of stress can also be a trigger. Other causes may include infection, low oxygen level, surgery, and anesthesia. If the heart is not getting enough blood flow (like during or after a heart attack) or if the heart is inflamed in any way, PVCs may occur. (2).

## Tip of the Month

### Tips to Lower Your Caffeine:

1. Figure out what in your diet has caffeine.
2. Look at your medications. Some over the counter medications, especially those for headaches, have caffeine in them.
3. Limit your soda intake. If you just can't do it, switch to caffeine free.
4. Coffee obviously has caffeine and usually has the most out of all the drinks. However, tea can be sneaky. So just change over the decaf or limit yourself to one cup (not one mug!).(3).





Recipe from  
“Breaking the Salt  
Habit” by Erik  
Williams. (1).

# Sour Cream and Onion Mashed Potatoes

## Ingredients:

- 2lb Potatoes
- 1\3 cup Light Sour Cream
- 1\4 cup Skim Milk
- 1\4 cup Green Onion, green part only
- 3 Tbsp. Unsalted Butter
- Pepper to Taste

## Directions:

1. Peel and slice potatoes into small chunks and place in a large pot.
2. Cover with water and boil 15-20 minutes or until potatoes are tender.
3. Drain.
4. Using an electric mixer, mash potatoes and blend in remaining ingredients until creamy.

## Nutrition Info

Yields 6 servings  
1 Serving = 1\2 cup

Calories: 264  
Total Fat: 7g  
Sat Fat: 5g  
Cholesterol: 20mg  
Potassium: 1073mg  
Carbohydrates: 39g  
Protein: 6g  
Fiber: 6g  
Sugar: 3g  
Sodium: 32mg

Enjoy!

**Quote of the Month:** “Tough times never last, but tough people do.” Robert H. Schuller

## Did you Know?

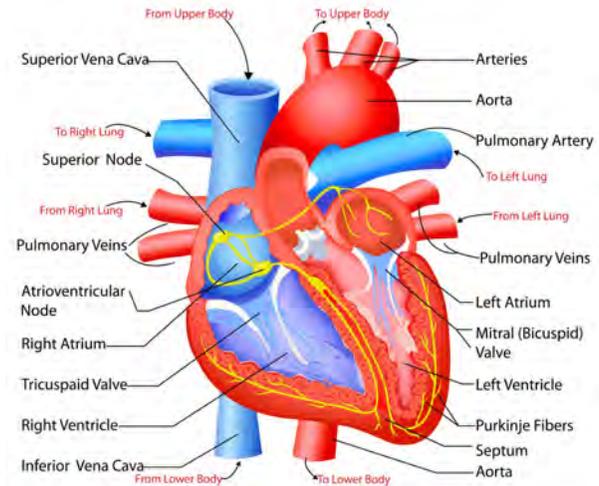


Did you know that there are certain Thanksgiving foods to watch out for if you have heart problems? First, for people that are on Coumadin or Warfarin, Thanksgiving can be a time where the diet changes and this may have an effect on the Coumadin level, also know as the INR. Alcohol does interact with Coumadin so it is best to just avoid it all together, especially if this is something that you do not normally drink. Some common Thanksgiving foods that are high in Vitamin K include spinach, brussel sprouts, collard greens, mustard greens, and turnip greens. Peas and Broccoli are also common side dishes that may interact with your Coumadin level. So just eat these foods minimally. (6).

The other elephant in the room at Thanksgiving is sodium. Try to prepare from scratch as many of the foods as possible. Try to find a Turkey that hasn't been injected with sodium. Other terms on packaging may include broth, saline, or sodium solution. Mashed potatoes tend to be high in sodium so make the recipe listed above. Pumpkin pie can have as much as 450mg of sodium per slice. Cream style canned corn can have up to 700mg of sodium per cup. Watch out for the casseroles. Casseroles tend to have hidden sodium in them. The rolls and gravy also are sodium laden so eat them sparingly. Green bean casserole is always a favorite but it is always high in sodium unless it is made specifically to be low salt. Fill up fresh fruits and vegetables, lean low sodium turkey, and just eat small portions of the other stuff! (5,7).

**Are PVCs Dangerous?** Most of the time, PVCs are benign, especially if the heart is otherwise normal. However, if they are excessive, they can cause heart failure. In people with heart disease, they can sometimes cause more problems and or be a sign of other dangerous rhythms such as ventricular tachycardia. If PVCs lead to ventricular tachycardia, then that could be life threatening.

**What is the treatment of PVCs?** First, any reversible cause should be treated. So smoking cessation, alcohol cessation, limiting caffeine intake, and replacing potassium or magnesium if it needs to be replaced. The rest of the workup really hinges on symptoms. If someone has symptoms typical of heart disease or is at high risk for heart disease, then a stress test and/or an echocardiogram may need to be done. Again, fixing any underlying cause may eliminate the PVCs. If the PVCs are excessive or if they are causing symptoms, then medications may be tried. First line medication is usually a beta blocker. Calcium channel blockers may also be tried if there is no evidence of heart failure. Stronger medications called antiarrhythmic may be used if needed. These medications may include Flecainide, Rythmol, Sotalol, and Amiodarone. If medication fails or if someone is intolerant to medication, then a procedure called an ablation may be done. This can be done if the majority of the PVCs are coming from the same place.  
(2,4).



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