Palpitations

For any patient complaint of palpitations (e.g., rapid heart rate beat, skipped beats, chest fluttering) with normal rate and rhythm on the ECG

History
- Age
- Past medical history
- Medications (e.g., Theophylline, Adderall, diet pills, thyroid supplements, decongestants, and Digoxin)
- Diet (caffeine)
- Drugs (e.g., nicotine and illegal drugs; withdrawal)
- History of palpitations/SVT
- Frequency of heart beat irregularity

Signs and Symptoms
- Anxiety
- Irregular heart beat
- O₂ sat > 92%
- Jitter
- Heart rate < 120
- Normotensive blood pressure
- Normal mental status
- Potential presenting rhythm:
  - Atrial/sinus tachycardia
  - Atrial fibrillation/flutter

Differential
- PVC/PAC
- A-Fib/A-Flutter
- Electrolyte imbalance
- Exertion, pain, or emotional stress
- Fever
- Hypovolemia or anemia
- Drug effect/overdose (see History)
- Hypoxia
- Sick Sinus Syndrome

Pearls
- If the patient has an identifiable dysrhythmia (e.g., narrow or wide complex tachycardia), exit to appropriate treatment protocol.
- For asymptomatic patients (or those with only minimal symptoms, such as palpitations) and any tachycardia with a rate of approximately 100 – 120 with a normal blood pressure, strongly consider close observation or fluid bolus rather than immediate treatment with an anti-arrhythmic medication. For example, a patient’s “usual” atrial fibrillation may not require emergent treatment.

Cardiac monitor
- 12-Lead ECG
- Consider, IV
- Consider, Normal Saline 500ml bolus
  - Maximum 2L

Notify receiving facility. Consider Base Hospital for medical direction.