



Heart-Rate, ECG & Afib Alerts on Wearables: What They Catch

What the heart features on Apple Watch, Pixel Watch and Fitbit, and Samsung Galaxy Watch really do — and don't

————— **An Extended Guide · No. 1683** —————

Tech Made Simple. Service Made Personal.

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WELCOME**1.! Read this first — helpful gadgets, not medical devices**

A quick, important note before we start. The rings, watches, and earbuds in this guide are everyday consumer gadgets, not medical equipment, and I am a tech helper, not a doctor or a nurse. What follows is plain-English general information to help you understand and set up these devices — it is not medical advice, and it cannot replace your doctor. A wearable can be a helpful extra set of eyes, but it can also miss things or raise a false alarm, so never ignore how you actually feel because of what a gadget says. If you have symptoms or a health worry, call your doctor, and in an emergency call 911. This guide is general information, not medical advice. A heart alert on a watch is a nudge to talk with your doctor — never a diagnosis, and never a reason to change a medicine. If you have chest pain, trouble breathing, fainting, or feel very unwell, call 911 first and look at the watch later. What is your watch really telling you about your heart? Many watches now watch your heart all day, tap you with an alert, and even draw an ECG on request. That can feel reassuring or frightening. This guide explains what these features do and, just as important, what they do not do. I'm Bill, and I run Bill's Home Tech here in Portage County, Ohio. I've spent 30+ years helping people feel at home with their technology, patiently and in plain language. I'm a tech helper, not a doctor, so I won't tell you what your heart is doing. I will help you understand the tool and set it up. We'll cover Apple Watch, Google's Pixel Watch and Fitbit, and Samsung Galaxy Watch. I sell no devices and earn no commission, so this is honest guidance from my kitchen table to yours. Questions are welcome. If an alert has you worried, please call your doctor first. If you'd like help understanding or setting up the watch, call or text me at (330) 200-8042.

THE 60-SECOND VERSION

2. The whole guide, on one page

If you remember only a handful of things, let it be these.

- Watches measure your heart rate with light sensors on the back, all day and night, and can alert you when it seems unusually high or low.
- Supported models can also watch for an irregular rhythm that may be atrial fibrillation (Afib) and send an irregular-rhythm notification.
- Supported models have an ECG app that takes a short, on-demand reading when you hold a finger on the watch. It is FDA-cleared on those models.
- These are screening aids, not diagnoses. Only a clinician diagnoses.
- False alarms happen, and so do misses. A quiet watch does not prove your heart is fine.
- Never change or stop a medicine because of a watch. Bring the alert and its data to your doctor.
- Chest pain, fainting, or trouble breathing means 911, not a watch reading.

WATCH OUT

How you feel outranks the gadget. If you feel unwell and the watch says everything is normal, trust how you feel and call your doctor or 911. A watch can miss things.

HOW IT WORKS

3. How a watch senses your heart

There is no magic here. It is a little light and a little math.

On the back of the watch are small green lights and sensors. Your blood flows through your wrist, and the sensors notice the tiny changes in light as your pulse pushes blood through. The watch counts those pulses to give you a heart rate, and it can look at the spacing between beats for patterns. This works best when the watch sits snug against bare skin, a finger-width above the wrist bone. A loose band, a tattoo, cold hands, or lots of arm movement can all make the reading less reliable. Snug, not tight. A band that is snug during exercise and a little looser the rest of the day is comfortable and usually reads better than one that slides around.

THREE FEATURES

4. Three different heart features, three different jobs

People mix these up all the time, so let's pull them apart.

Feature What it does How it works Heart rate Shows your beats per minute Always on, in the background High / low alerts Taps you when your rate seems unusual You turn it on and choose settings Irregular rhythm (Afib) Notifies you of a possible irregular rhythm Background checks on supported models ECG app Takes a short reading on request You start it and hold a finger on the watch The first three run quietly by themselves. The ECG app is different: nothing happens until you open it and take a reading, which makes it a good tool when you feel a flutter or skipped beat and want something to show your doctor. Check what your model supports Not every watch has every feature. Look at the maker's current page for your exact model, or call me and we'll look together.

CONTINUOUS HEART RATE

5. Continuous heart rate: what 'normal' means for you

Your watch will show a number. What does that number mean?

A heart rate that is steady and low when you rest, and rises when you climb stairs, is a heart doing its job. Everyone's normal is a little different, and it shifts with age, fitness, sleep, caffeine, stress, illness, and many medicines. I'm not going to give you a magic number, because I'm not your doctor and the right range depends on you. Ask your doctor what is normal for you, and write it down inside this guide. What the watch is good at

- Showing your trends over weeks, such as a resting rate creeping up.
- Giving a rough picture during a walk or a workout.
- Giving you something specific to tell your doctor. A trend beats a single number One odd reading on a cold, bumpy day means little. A pattern you can show your doctor means more.

HIGH & LOW ALERTS

6. High and low heart-rate alerts

These alerts tap your wrist when your heart rate stays outside a range for a while.

Apple Watch, Pixel Watch and Fitbit, and Samsung Galaxy Watch offer some form of high and low heart-rate notification. You can usually turn it on and pick the limits in the watch's companion app. The exact menu names change with software updates, so look under the heart or health settings. The alert generally looks at a stretch of time at rest rather than a quick spike, which cuts down on false alarms. It still may buzz when you are not in trouble, or stay quiet when something is wrong.

WATCH OUT

Do not pick the limits alone. Ask your doctor before choosing the high and low numbers, especially if you take a heart or blood-pressure medicine. Do not change any medicine because of an alert.

IRREGULAR RHYTHM

7. Irregular-rhythm notifications (Afib)

Atrial fibrillation, or Afib, is an irregular heartbeat that can come and go, so a person may not feel it. On supported models, the watch checks your pulse in the background, usually when you are still. If it notices a pattern that looks irregular several times, it sends a notification that you may have an irregular rhythm. Apple Watch, Pixel Watch and Fitbit, and Samsung Galaxy Watch all offer a version of this on supported models. A notification is not a diagnosis. It means the watch saw something worth a professional look. Afib is something a doctor confirms, usually with a proper heart tracing, and decides how to treat.

WATCH OUT

If you get this alert stay calm. If you have chest pain, faintness, or trouble breathing, call 911. If you feel fine, call your doctor's office, tell them about the notification, and ask what they want you to do. Do not start or stop any medicine on your own.

THE ECG APP

8. The ECG app, step by step

An ECG, or electrocardiogram, records the tiny electrical signals of your heartbeat.

A watch can take a short, single-lead version. On supported models the ECG app is FDA-cleared. That means it cleared a review for its job, which is helping to look for signs of Afib. It does not mean it finds heart attacks, blockages, or everything else that can go wrong. How a reading generally goes

- Open the ECG app on the watch.
- Rest your arm on a table and sit still.
- Hold a finger of your other hand on the watch's crown or button, as it asks.
- Wait for the countdown and keep still and quiet until it finishes.
- The watch reports a result and saves a record you can share with your doctor.

WATCH OUT

It cannot see a heart attack A normal-looking watch ECG does not rule out a heart attack. If you have chest pressure, pain, or other warning signs, call 911 right away.

READING RESULTS

9. Reading the result without panic

The watch will give a short result in plain words. Here is how to think about the common ones. The watch says What it generally means What to do Sinus rhythm Nothing worrying was seen in that reading Do not treat it as a clean bill of health Signs of Afib A pattern that may be Afib Call your doctor; bring the record Inconclusive The watch could not tell Try again still and snug; mention it if it repeats Poor recording Too much movement or a loose fit Retake it Words differ slightly between Apple, Google and Samsung, but the idea is the same. None of these words is a diagnosis, and a normal reading only describes those few seconds. Save the record Each reading can usually be saved as a PDF or in the health app. Having it ready makes the doctor's visit shorter and more useful.

FALSE ALARMS

10. False alarms: why the watch cries wolf

Sometimes the watch says something is wrong when nothing is.

- A loose band or a sweaty wrist can confuse the light sensor.
- Arm movement, such as raking leaves, washing dishes or shivering, adds noise.
- Caffeine, a poor night's sleep, stress or a fever can speed the pulse.
- Extra or skipped beats that are harmless can look odd to the watch.
- Software is cautious by design, so it may alert when in doubt. A false alarm is annoying and can be scary. The right response is still to tell your doctor, since only a clinician can tell a harmless blip from a true problem. You are not wasting anyone's time. Don't hide behind 'it's probably nothing' If an alert repeats, tell your doctor even if you feel fine. A pattern is worth a professional look.

MISSES

11. Misses: the quiet watch problem

Just as important, and less talked about: a watch can say nothing when something is going on. Irregular-rhythm checks only run at certain times, usually when you are still, and Afib can come and go. If it is not happening when the watch checks, no alert. Many heart problems, including a heart attack, are things these features are not designed to catch at all. Please do not let a calm watch talk you out of seeing a doctor, keeping an appointment, or calling 911. The watch is an extra pair of eyes, never a replacement for your regular checkups.

WATCH OUT

No alert is not an all-clear Symptoms such as chest discomfort, a racing or pounding heart, shortness of breath, dizziness or fainting deserve a call to your doctor, whatever the watch says. For severe symptoms, call 911.

APPLE WATCH

12. Apple Watch heart features

Apple Watch has the longest history here, and the features are managed through the Health and Watch apps on the iPhone.

- Heart rate: shown on the watch and saved in the Health app.
- High and low heart-rate notifications: set up in the Heart settings.

- Irregular rhythm notifications: a background check on supported models.
- ECG app: available on supported models, FDA-cleared in the US. Setup for the rhythm and ECG features usually asks for your birth date and walks you through a short explanation. Settings paths change with software versions, so look in the Watch app and in Health, in the Heart area. An iPhone is required. An Apple Watch pairs with an iPhone. If you use an Android phone, look at the Pixel Watch or Galaxy Watch sections instead.

PIXEL WATCH & FITBIT

13. Pixel Watch and Fitbit heart features

Google makes the Pixel Watch and owns Fitbit, and the two share much of the same heart technology.

- Heart rate: tracked all day in the companion app.
- Heart-rate alerts: options for high and low notifications.
- Irregular rhythm notifications: on supported models, in the US.
- ECG app: on supported models, where cleared. Pixel Watch also has a Loss of Pulse Detection feature in the US that can call for help if it believes your pulse has stopped. That is a safety feature, not a screening tool, and we touch on it in the SOS guide. Features vary by country and model. A feature that exists in one country may not be turned on in another. Check the maker's current page for your model and region.

WHO IS IT FOR

14. Who these features help, and who they don't

A heart feature suits some people well and gives others more worry than help.

When the features can help These tools can be a good companion if you are curious, active, or already working with a doctor.

- Someone whose doctor has said a trend or reading would be useful to see.
- Someone who sometimes feels a flutter and wants a record to show.
- Someone who likes to see steady numbers during walks and sleep.
- A family member who wants the wearer to have a safety net, along with regular checkups. When they may cause more worry than help Constant numbers can make a nervous person more nervous, and alerts can lead to anxious late nights.
- Someone who checks the watch dozens of times a day and feels worse for it.
- Someone who might skip a doctor visit because the watch looks fine.
- Someone who would be tempted to change a medicine based on a reading.

- Someone who finds the notifications confusing; turn alerts down, or ask me to. You can turn features off Every one of these alerts can be switched off or tuned down. If a feature stresses you out, it is fine to turn it off after talking with your doctor. I'm happy to help at (330) 200-8042.

SAMSUNG

15. Samsung Galaxy Watch heart features

Samsung's Galaxy Watch works with Android phones, and the heart tools live in the Samsung Health Monitor app on supported setups.

- Heart rate: tracked through the day, with high and low alerts.
- Irregular rhythm notifications: on supported models and regions.
- ECG: on supported models, using the Samsung Health Monitor app. Samsung's health monitoring features often depend on a paired Samsung Galaxy phone and your country. Check Samsung's current page for your model and phone before you buy if heart features matter to you.

WATCH OUT

Match the watch to the phone Some watches work best, or only fully, with the maker's own phone. Confirm the pairing before buying, or call me and I'll help you check.

WHAT ABOUT RINGS

16. What about smart rings?

Rings are popular for sleep and wellness, so folks often ask whether they do ECG or Afib alerts. In general, smart rings track resting heart rate, heart-rate variability, skin temperature trends, sleep and movement. They generally do not take a medical ECG the way some watches do, and they are not medical devices. A ring can be a comfortable way to watch trends, especially overnight. But if your doctor wants you to use an ECG or irregular-rhythm feature, a supported watch is the tool to look at. Check any ring's current features on the maker's own page. Comfort is a real feature The best wearable is the one you will actually keep on. For some folks that is a ring. For heart alerts, ask your doctor which kind they trust.

YOUR DOCTOR

17. Talking with your doctor about a watch alert

A little preparation turns a worrying alert into a useful visit.

- Write down the date and time of each alert.
- Note what you were doing: resting, walking, sleeping, or after coffee.
- Save or screenshot the ECG record or the alert screen.
- List how you felt: nothing, a flutter, dizziness, or short of breath.
- Bring your full medicine list, including vitamins.
- Ask what the doctor wants you to do if it happens again. Some doctors love watch data and some find it noisy. Either is fine. Your symptoms, your history and their own tests matter most. Our guide on sharing wearable health data with your doctor and family shows how to export and share the records safely. I can help you print it If getting a record off the watch and onto paper feels fiddly, I'll do it with you at your table. Call (330) 200-8042.

MEDICINES & SAFETY

18. Medicines, and the one rule you never break

This page is short on purpose, because the rule is simple.

! Never change a medicine because of a watch Do not start, stop, skip or change the dose of any medicine because of a watch reading or alert. Heart and blood-pressure medicines can be dangerous to adjust without your doctor. Call the office and ask. That includes blood thinners, heart-rhythm medicines and blood-pressure pills. If an alert worries you, the right move is a phone call to your doctor or pharmacist, not a decision at the kitchen counter. I'm a tech helper and I will always tell you to ask your doctor. It is not that I don't want to help. It is that they know your whole health picture.

SETTING IT UP

19. Turning the features on, safely

Here is a calm, general order for setting up the heart tools.

- Update the watch and the phone first so you have current software.
- Enter your correct birth date and details in the health profile.
- Open the heart settings and read each explanation as it appears.
- Turn on the irregular-rhythm notifications if your model supports them.
- Decide with your doctor whether to use high and low alerts, and what limits.
- Try one ECG reading while you feel fine, so the steps are familiar.
- Make sure Emergency SOS and Medical ID are set up too (see the SOS guide). Taking a practice ECG on a calm day means you won't be fumbling if you ever need one on a worrying day. Practice when you feel fine. Learning a feature when you're calm is far easier than learning it when you're anxious.

SCAMS & PRIVACY

20. Heart data is private data

Your heart readings are personal, and scammers know it.

- A call or text claiming your watch 'detected a heart problem' and asking for money, a card number or a code is a scam.
- No real doctor or company will ask for your account password.
- Be wary of 'free' heart-screening apps and sellers who claim a watch can diagnose or cure.
- Share records only with people you choose, in ways you understand. Consumer health apps are generally not covered by the same privacy rules as your doctor's records, which is covered in the guide on sharing wearable health data safely.

WATCH OUT

Slow down when someone is rushing you. Real alerts come from your own watch and phone. If a stranger contacts you about your heart, hang up and call your doctor's office or me.

COMMON QUESTIONS

21. Common Questions

The questions I hear most about heart features on wearables.

Q: Can my watch diagnose Afib? No. It can notify you of a possible irregular rhythm or record an ECG that suggests Afib, but only a clinician diagnoses it and decides what to do.

Q: The watch says my rhythm is normal. Am I fine? Not necessarily. It only describes those few seconds, and it is not built to catch every heart problem. If you feel unwell, call your doctor or 911.

Q: Should I get a watch just for the ECG? That is a good question for your doctor. Some people find it useful; others worry more. Check that the model you want supports the feature. Q: What if I get alerts all the time? Tell your doctor. Also check the fit and settings. A repeating alert is worth a professional look, and I can help tune the watch.

Q: Is it OK to stop a medicine if the watch looks good? No. Never change a medicine because of a watch. Ask your doctor. Still unsure? Call or text me at (330) 200-8042 and we'll go through it together at a pace that suits you.

BILL'S HERE TO HELP

22. You don't have to do this alone

You just have to remember that a friendly, patient person is one call away.

I hope this guide made heart features on a wearable feel a little less daunting and a lot more doable. Keep it in a drawer with your other home papers, come back to a page whenever you need it, and don't worry about memorizing anything. When you'd rather have a hand, that's exactly what I do. I come to your home, work at your pace, and never make you feel rushed or silly for asking. A first visit is a flat \$99, and for the parts that don't need me on-site I can often help right on your screen for \$49. Every visit comes with a 30-day, come-back-free guarantee. I'm a tech helper, not a doctor, an audiologist, or your pharmacist — for a medical question, a hearing test, or anything about your health, I'll gladly help you get set up, but the right professional is the one to answer it, and I'll help you line that person up. Bill's Home Tech — real help, close to home Call or text me at (330) 200-8042, or visit BillsHomeTech.com. Serving Atwater and all of Portage County. 30+ years of patient, plain-English tech help — and if you're ever not 100% happy with a visit, I'll make it right or refund it. That's a promise. — Bill

AT A GLANCE

A Picture to Follow Along

Heart Features at a Glance

Four tools, four different jobs

	What it does	How it runs
Heart rate	Shows your pulse	Always on
High / low alert	Taps you if unusual	You set it up
Afib notice	Flags irregular rhythm	Background check
ECG app	Short reading	You start it

Screening aids, not diagnoses -- only a clinician diagnoses.

AT A GLANCE

A Second Look

What a Watch Can and Cannot Do

Helpful, but never the final word

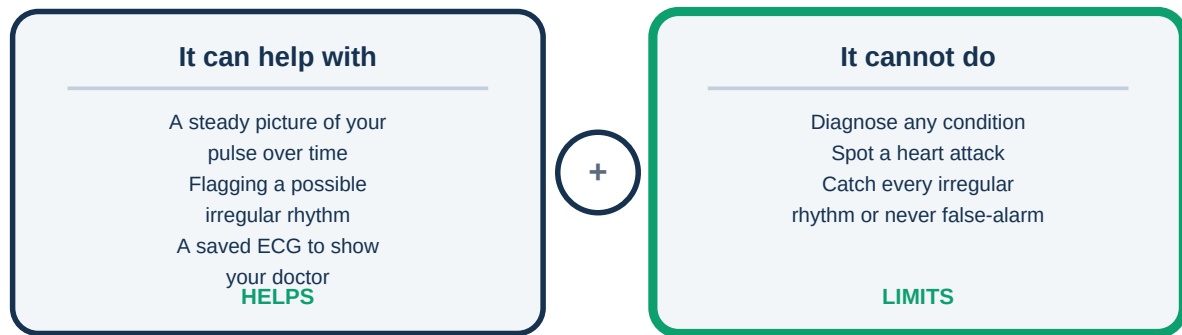
**Trust how you feel -- call your doctor, or 911 in an emergency.**

Illustration - a schematic, not to scale. Your setup may differ.

BEFORE YOU GO

A Note From Bill

A quick note from Bill. I write these guides to make home tech a little less frustrating, and I do my best to keep every step accurate and up to date. Still, every home, device, and setup is a bit different, so I can't promise a guide will match yours exactly or fix your particular problem. These guides are for general information only — they're not professional, legal, or financial advice, and they don't replace your device's own manual or the manufacturer's instructions. Please go slow, use your own good judgment, and use everything here at your own risk. If a step involves electrical wiring, a gas appliance, a water heater, plumbing, or climbing a ladder — or if anything just doesn't feel safe — please stop and call a licensed professional (or give me a call at 330-200-8042). Bill's Home Tech and Bill Davis can't be responsible for any damage, data loss, or injury that results.



HOW I CAN HELP

Your Visit — and My Promise

In-home visit — \$99 flat for your first visit. No contracts and no surprise charges, and a 30-day follow-up is included.

Remote Support — \$49 for a screen-share session. I only connect with your permission, you watch the whole time, and you can end anytime. If I can't fix it over the screen-share, I refund the \$49 — and if it turns out you need me in person, that \$49 goes toward your visit. It's included free for Support Plan members (\$39/mo).

GOOD TO KNOW

My promise — If you're not 100% satisfied with your visit, I'll come back at no charge, or refund the full \$99. No questions, no awkwardness. That's how I'd want to be treated.

Call or text **(330) 200-8042** · Book a visit: billshometech.com/book · bill@billshometech.com

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