



**About your procedure**  
**Cardioversion**

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## **Cardioversion – what is it?**

Cardioversion is the process of converting an abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia) to a normal rhythm. A direct current cardioversion, also known as electrical cardioversion, is a procedure in which an electrical current is delivered to the heart to restore normal rhythm. The procedure is performed by your cardiologist under anaesthetic so that you will be sedated when the actual cardioversion takes place.

## **Cardioversion – why would you need it?**

The most likely reason you would need cardioversion is because you have an abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia) such as atrial fibrillation or atrial flutter. These rhythms can lead to symptoms such as palpitations (heart racing), dizziness, shortness of breath and lethargy/tiredness.

Your cardiologist may have already tried medications to try to correct the arrhythmia (chemical cardioversion) which have not been successful. With a DCR, your heart rhythm can be restored to normal (this is known as sinus rhythm) and you are likely to feel better as a result.

## **Your preparation before the procedure**

If you are coming from home it is likely you will be admitted to Day of Surgery Admission (DOSA) for your procedure. However, if an overnight stay is required, you will be transferred to the Cardiac Short Stay Unit after the procedure under the care of specialist nurses. Your Doctor will advise your admitting point.

Please bring any medications you take (in their original packets) and show them to your admitting nurse.

- You will be given some paperwork to complete before admission if required. This information will help us to provide the right care for your specific needs
- You may receive a call from the preadmission clinic if we need to clarify any other details
- You will be given an information pack prior to procedure (or on arrival) depending on the time of the procedure and when you see the doctor
- You must not eat anything for 6 hours prior to your procedure

You can have clear fluids up to two hours before your procedure

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Follow your doctor's advice about stopping or continuing medications

- You can take any usual medications with a sip of water, unless you have been instructed to do otherwise
- You will be given a consent form to sign with your nurse or doctor prior to the procedure
- A brief medical history will be taken by the nurse
- You will be given a hospital gown to change into – you may keep your underwear on and you may wear your dentures if you have them

Men may need their chests to be shaved for the procedure (this will be done during the procedure)

- You will be connected to the heart monitor via a number of cables and to the portable defibrillator via special gel pads applied to the front and side or back of your chest
  - The anaesthetist will administer your anaesthetic and you will drift off to sleep. You may be given some additional oxygen via a mask to support your breathing
  - Once you are ready you will then be transferred to the procedure area
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## **Cardioversion – what are the risks?**

In recommending this procedure, your cardiologist has weighed up the benefits and risks of the procedure and believes this is the best course of action for you.

## **After the procedure**

- You will wake up quickly after the procedure, but you may remain drowsy for a little while.
  - Your nurse will remain at the bedside with you until you have recovered from the anaesthetic and your condition is stable.
  - Your nurse will measure your blood pressure, heart rate and oxygen level frequently for two hours after your procedure.
  - You will be allowed to eat and drink when you are fully awake.
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### **After the procedure (leaving hospital)**

- After four hours of observations, having had something to eat and drink, and passed urine, you may be allowed to go home. There are exceptions to this, and patients who have their procedure late in the day may need to stay in hospital overnight, or your cardiologist may request you to stay a bit longer for extended monitoring.
- Your cardiologist and nurse will review your medications with you and you will have an opportunity to ask questions.
- A discharge information package will be given to you with all the necessary information such as medication lists, medical follow-up appointments and request forms for any follow-up tests.
- You will need to be accompanied home by an adult family member or friend.

### **Recovery: Information for you and your family**

- Plan to rest at home on the day of your procedure
  - See your general practitioner within one week of discharge from hospital
  - Return to normal activities as you feel ready
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