



Cardiac Catheter Ablation

1. What is a cardiac catheter ablation?

Ablation is used to treat some types of rapid, irregular or abnormal heart beats.

There are two types of Ablation - Radio Frequency Ablation (RFA) and Cryo Ablation. You will have one of the following procedures:

A needle with a tube connected to it will be put in your arm. This is called an intravenous line or IV.

You will have an injection of local anaesthetic into your right groin.

A very small incision is made in the skin and a special catheter, is passed up through the vein in the groin into your heart. The doctors can see the catheter using X-Rays.

The doctor is able to find the abnormal heartbeat in a particular area of the heart. The catheter will 'burn or freeze' that part of the heart muscle. This will cause a scar to this area of the heart. It may take several attempts to scar the area.

A mild burning feeling may be felt in the chest when the abnormal pathway is being disconnected. This is the 'ablation'. The burning feeling will lessen when the ablation ceases. This burning feeling does not occur with cyro ablation.

When the scar forms, this cuts off the abnormal pathway. This prevents further abnormal heartbeats.

2. Anaesthetic

This procedure will require a local anaesthetic. Sedation may also be given.

3. What are the risks of this specific procedure?

In recommending this procedure your doctor has balanced the benefits and risks of the procedure against the benefits and risks of not proceeding. Your doctor believes there is a net benefit to you going ahead. This is a very complicated assessment.

There are risks and complications with this procedure. They include but are not limited to the following.

Common risks and complications (more than 5%) include:

- Minor bruising at the puncture site.

Uncommon risks and complications (1- 5%) include:

- Heart block. This may require a pacemaker.
- Major bruising or swelling at the groin puncture site. This may need surgery to drain the blood from the bruise.
- A hole is accidentally made in the heart or heart valve. This will need surgery to repair.
- Blood clot in the lung.
- Blood clot in the leg (DVT) causing pain and swelling. In rare cases part of the clot may break off and go to the lungs.
- Skin injury from radiation. This may cause reddening of the skin.

Rare risks and complications (less than 1%) include;

- Heart attack.
- Accidental tear or puncture of the artery. This may require surgery to repair.
- A higher lifetime risk from exposure to radiation.
- A stroke. This may cause long term disability.
- A punctured lung. This may require a tube to be put in to the chest to reinflate the lung.
- Death as a result of this procedure is rare.

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