Implantation of an implantable loop recorder (ILR)

You may have been experiencing blackouts or palpitations that may indicate you have an abnormal heart rhythm. Your doctor has recommended that you have an implantable loop recorder fitted.

What is an implantable loop recorder and how does it work?

An implantable loop recorder (ILR) is a small, metal, battery-powered device that records your heart rate and rhythm in order to identify any abnormalities. Implantable loop recorders are extremely reliable and sophisticated devices with a battery life of up to 18 months. This makes them suitable for patients who have infrequent symptoms. Although they monitor the heart rhythm automatically, the recorder should also be manually activated when you have symptoms, so that a record of the heart rhythm a few minutes before and after the point of activation can be stored. If you suffer with blackouts, this gives you time to recover and activate the recorder or for a friend or relative to activate the recorder for you.

Information stored in the ILR is retrieved through a remote device that is placed on the skin over the implant and communicates with the ILR. We recommend this is done after each occasion you have manually activated the ILR, or every 12 months to see if there have been any automatic activations. This is performed in the Pacemaker Outpatient clinic.

The ILR is normally implanted underneath the skin and in front of the muscle on the left or right of the upper chest (usually the left) or under the arm on the left side. Local anaesthetic is used to numb the area and to minimise discomfort, and mild sedation is sometimes given. Please let your doctor or nurse know if you would like to have some sedation. As with any surgical procedure, there will be a 1-2 cm scar visible but every effort is made to minimise this. There may also be a small bump where the implantable loop recorder is fitted. Please tell your doctor if you have a preference about where the loop recorder is implanted.

When the ILR has successfully recorded the heart rhythm and a diagnosis has been made, or if the battery runs out, it is then removed.

Benefits

The main benefit from having an implantable loop recorder is that it will constantly monitor your heart rhythm. If you have some symptoms, and press the activator button, it will store the heart rhythm so that the Doctor can review it later.

Risks

All medical procedures have a risk of complication. For an ILR these include:

- Bruising over the implantable loop recorder is common and usually of no consequence. About 1% (1 in every 100 patients) may develop a collection of blood called a haematoma over the ILR. Occasionally this needs to be drained.
- There is a less than 1% (1 in every 100 patients) chance of the implantable loop...
Your doctor will recommend that you have an Implantable Loop Recorder if he/she feels the benefits of this investigation outweigh the risks.

Alternatives
Your doctors have recommended that this is the most appropriate investigation for your condition. If you wish to discuss alternatives, please talk to the doctor before you sign the consent form.

After the procedure
- Once fully awake, you should be able to eat and drink.
- You will normally be able to go home in the afternoon, with a relative or friend.
- The DVLA states that you cannot drive if you have been suffering from blackouts. There may be some special instructions about regulations for driving and this information will be given to you by the doctor, nurse or cardiac physiologist.
- You will normally be seen in the outpatient clinic about 4 to 6 weeks after the procedure and then at least once per year to check the performance and battery of the implantable loop recorder.

How to contact us
Pacemaker Office at the John Radcliffe Hospital: Oxford (01865) 220981 and 221432

Please note:
The figures quoted in this document are average figures for all cases. Your Cardiologist will discuss with you any specific additional aspects of your case before the procedure.

The department where your procedure will take place regularly has professional observers. The majority of these observers are health care professionals, qualified or in training and on occasions, specialist company representatives. If you do not wish observers to be present during your procedure please inform a doctor or nurse.