



The Heart Rhythm Charity

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## Catheter Ablation

Sometimes, the electrical system within the heart can travel in different directions due to additional cells or extra electrical connections known as “pathways within the heart”. Catheter ablation is a technique used to treat a variety of heart rhythm disorders by removing the extra electrical cells which can cause the arrhythmia.

### During the procedure

Catheter ablation is a minimally invasive procedure, which is usually performed using local anaesthetic. Most patients are also given some sedation, which makes you feel relaxed and you may go to sleep for a while.

During the procedure some fine tubes will be inserted into the blood vessel at the top of the right leg and sometimes in the shoulder under the collarbone or in your neck. Fine wires, or catheters, are then passed through the tubes and positioned at certain locations within the heart. Extra beats are then delivered using an external pacemaker, which may bring on your palpitations. This is necessary to see where the defected heart rhythm is coming from. The doctor performing the procedure will then begin to ablate the pathway or area of extra electrical cells. This is done by delivering a form of energy down the wire to the target area within the heart.

Once the procedure has finished, the wires and tubes will be removed and you will spend a few hours recovering on the ward.

### After the ablation

Most people recover quickly from the procedure and feel well enough to carry on with normal activities the following day. However, you should avoid heavy lifting for about two weeks afterwards.

The DVLA states that you must not drive for two days after the ablation. If you work, you may wish to take a few days off to recover fully.

Following the ablation, it is quite common to be aware of your own heartbeat, even in normal rhythm. Some people are aware of extra or “missed” beats. Try not to worry too much about these symptoms, which usually settle down with time.

If you experience palpitations or a racing heartbeat, you should report this to your doctor, as this may indicate that the procedure has not been completely successful.

The benefit of having a catheter ablation is that your heart rhythm disturbance is cured without the need of ongoing medication. This is possible in the vast majority of cases however, a small number of individuals will need more than one session of treatment.