

What is an ablation procedure?

Patient Information

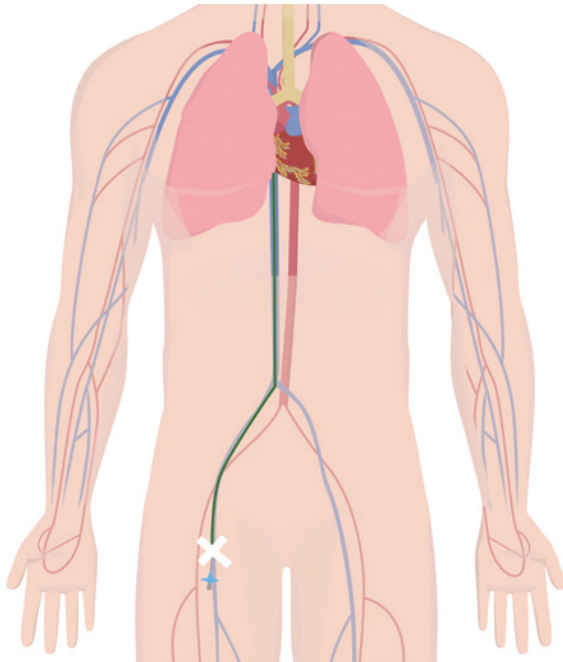


What is a catheter ablation?

Catheter ablation is a non-surgical procedure that is performed by a specialist doctor called an Electrophysiologist. Electrophysiologists are specialist doctors who focus on your heart's electrical system and on diagnosing and treating irregular heartbeats or arrhythmias. Electrophysiologists are qualified to perform special tests of your heart's electrical system, such as an electrophysiology study or an ablation.

A 3D cardiac mapping system that acts like a navigation system is used to create a map of your heart in real time. Guided by this map, the Electrophysiologist places a catheter into your heart to pinpoint the source of the abnormal electrical signals.

When the source of your arrhythmia is located, therapeutic catheters are used to produce small scars on the targeted part of your heart tissues. This process blocks the abnormal electrical signals causing your arrhythmia.



Is catheter ablation safe?

Cardiac ablation is a low-risk procedure that may reduce the symptoms of your heart arrhythmia. In many cases, patients who receive an ablation procedure either experience a long-term reduction in the number of symptomatic episodes and severity of symptoms, or a permanent return to a normal heart rhythm.

This also means that medicines for controlling the arrhythmia may be reduced or stopped following successful catheter ablation. Complications from medicines used to manage arrhythmias may include fatigue, shortness of breath, dizziness as well as more serious complications.

As with any procedure, there are risks associated with catheter ablation that potentially include bleeding, swelling or bruising at the catheter insertion site and infection. More serious complications are rare, which can include damage to the heart or blood vessels; blood clots (which may lead to stroke); heart attack, or death.



How is the procedure performed?

The groin is numbed using local anaesthetic and short tubes (sheaths) are inserted in the veins. Then catheters (long, flexible tubes) are inserted via the right and sometimes left groin.

The Electrophysiologist moves the catheter inside the heart to localise the source of the abnormal rhythm. When the location is found, the ablation catheter is used to deliver energy that creates scar tissue of a few millimeters in diameter.

This scar tissue can no longer conduct electrical signals and therefore the abnormal rhythm will no longer occur. It is often necessary to burn or freeze multiple times. During the procedure you may feel chest pain which will spontaneously resolve after a short time.

After ablation, a validation will be performed to confirm that the heart tissue which has been ablated is now electrically inactive. Sometimes the doctor may try to induce the arrhythmia to check whether it has been resolved. If the arrhythmia can be induced, the procedure will be continued until the arrhythmia can no longer be induced.

How long is the procedure?

The catheter ablation procedure, including the electrophysiology study and mapping, may take several hours.



After the procedure?

When the procedure has been completed, the catheters and the sheaths will be removed from your groin. The nurse will apply a dressing or a pressure bandage around the groin and you will be helped into bed.

On return to the ward, you should remain lying down. After 4-6 hours, the dressing/pressure bandage will be removed and you may get out of bed after your groin has been checked by a doctor. The nurse will regularly check your blood pressure and an ECG may be performed for monitoring purposes.





Recovery after an ablation procedure

You will most likely stay in bed for several hours, or possibly overnight, after the procedure for observation and return home the following day.

You should make arrangements for a friend or family membership to collect you from hospital. Due to the wound in your groin, you will not be able to drive a car for around a week. Once home, it is recommended to rest and recover for two weeks following the procedure. This means avoid lifting heavy weights and exercising. After two weeks, you can resume your normal daily activities.



Individual results on the procedure outcome may vary depending on the workflow, type of disease and may require more than one procedure to achieve symptom control.

Patient Information:

1. What is an arrhythmia?
2. What is Atrial Fibrillation?
3. Preparing for my first arrhythmia consultation
- 4. What is an ablation procedure?**
5. My hospital stay for an ablation procedure
6. My recovery after an ablation procedure

For more information related to Atrial Fibrillation, please visit
[GETSMARTABOUTAFIB.IE](https://getsmartaboutafib.ie)



As with any medical treatment, individual results may vary. Only a Cardiologist or Electrophysiologist can determine whether ablation is an appropriate course of treatment. There are potential risks including bleeding, swelling or bruising at the catheter insertion site, and infection. More serious complications are rare, which can include damage to the heart or blood vessels; blood clots (which may lead to stroke); heart attack, or death. These risks need to be discussed with your doctor and recovery takes time.

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