

Atrial Fibrillation - What you need to know about cardioversion



What is a cardioversion and why might I need it?

A cardioversion is a procedure to restore your heart beat back to its normal rhythm. If your medicines are not working and you have severe symptoms, you may need a cardioversion. A cardioversion may be planned or it may be done on an urgent basis. To see if a cardioversion is right for you, speak to your family doctor or cardiologist about the risks and benefits. A cardioversion may not be right for you if you have other heart conditions or if there is a concern that there may be a blood clot in your heart.

There are two types of cardioversion. Both types of cardioversion do the same thing and your doctor will determine which type is best for you.

The two types of cardioversion are:

Electrical cardioversion

Electrical cardioversion is a brief, carefully monitored electrical 'shock' given to the heart to change an abnormal heart rhythm back to a normal rhythm. This shock will be applied by a machine called a defibrillator, using two sticky pads that are put on your chest and back. You will get medicines during the procedure to make you comfortable.

Chemical (medicine) cardioversion

Medicines are given, usually by injection through a vein but occasionally by mouth, to change an abnormal heart rhythm back to a normal rhythm.