Implantable Loop Recorder (ILR)

Information for patients

This leaflet can be made available in other formats including large print, CD and Braille and in languages other than English, upon request.

Your doctor has advised you have an Implantable Loop Recorder (ILR) fitted to monitor your heart rhythm and rate. This leaflet will help you understand what will happen before, during and after the procedure.

How does my heart work?

Your heart is a muscle that pumps blood around your body. It has its own electrical system to keep it working properly.

Some people develop problems with their heart’s electrical system leading to symptoms such as palpitations, dizziness or collapse. For many people a diagnosis can be made using tests such as electrocardiogram - ECG (heart tracing) or a monitor (a 24 or 72 hour continuous tape recording of your heart rate and rhythm).

These tests only record information for short periods of time. An ILR can record and store information for up to 3 years.

What is an ILR?

An ILR is a small electronic device in a metal casing. It is about the size of a packet of chewing gum or a USB computer memory stick. The ILR is fitted under the skin of your chest wall below your collar bone. It will monitor your heart rate and rhythm and record any abnormalities (problems).
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Are there any risks and possible complications?

The risk of complication is very low. You will be monitored for signs of any problems throughout the procedure.

The risks and possible complications include:

- **infection.** Despite all care taken during the procedure, sometimes an infection may still develop. If needed, you will be given antibiotics.

- **conscious light sedation.** This can sometimes cause problems with your breathing, heart rate and blood pressure.

- **pain.** You may feel a small amount of pain during or after the procedure.

- **bleeding.** If there is any bleeding after the procedure you must tell your nurse or contact the Unit.

- **bruising.** You may notice a little bruising to the skin around where the ILR was fitted. This should settle over the next 4 weeks.

- **scar.** There will be a small scar visible on your chest wall.

- **migration.** The loop recorder can sometimes move slightly from the original place it was fitted.

What should I do before my ILR is fitted?

It is important to arrange for someone to take you home. Depending on the type of job you do you may need to arrange time off work. Your doctor or nurse will discuss this with you. You can expect to be at the Cardiology Day Unit for most of the day. There is limited space in the Unit so only in special cases will anyone be allowed to stay with you, for example, patients with special needs.

Unless advised you should use your inhalers and take your tablets or medicines as usual. If you are taking Warfarin, Clopidogrel or Aspirin you will be given advice at your pre-assessment appointment.

Please bring with you a list of all the medications (drugs) you are currently taking, either prescribed by your doctor or those you have bought yourself, with you to your pre-assessment appointment and when you are admitted for your procedure.

Unless you are told otherwise you can eat and drink as usual before your procedure.

Please bring a dressing gown and slippers, if possible and you may wish to bring something to read or music to listen to.
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Please bring your reading glasses as you will need to read and sign a consent form.

Where will I go to have my ILR fitted?

Your procedure will be carried out in the Cardiology Day Unit at the University Hospital of North Tees. You will be sent a letter telling you when and where to come.

It is important you arrive at your appointment time so we can prepare you for your procedure and answer any further questions you may have. We are unable to give you an exact time for your procedure but we will keep you fully informed.

Who will be present during my procedure?

North Tees and Hartlepool NHS Foundation Trust is a teaching organisation. We could not train future nurses, doctors and other health professionals without the co-operation of patients.

A team of healthcare professionals including a cardiologist (a doctor who specialises in conditions of the heart), nurses, and cardiac physiologist (a person qualified to perform tests on the heart).

You will be informed if there are to be any observers present. Healthcare professionals in training may take part in your procedure according to their experience and stage of training. They will be supervised by fully qualified staff at all times.

What will happen when I arrive at the Cardiology Day Unit?

A nurse will show you to a bed in a screened area. You will need to undress and put on a theatre gown. The information given at your pre-assessment appointment will be checked for changes.

Your blood pressure, pulse and temperature will be checked. A cannula (a fine tube) will be inserted into a vein in the back of your hand or arm using a small, fine needle. This allows blood samples to be taken and medication to be given.

A doctor or nurse will explain the procedure again and also confirm you have signed a consent form.

Before you are taken into the procedure room your physiologist will visit you for "mapping" to help decide where the best place is for your ILR to be fitted.
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What will happen during the procedure?

The procedure takes about 30 minutes. You will be taken to the procedure room and asked to lie on a theatre bed. A nurse will stay with you to make sure you are comfortable.

You will be connected to equipment to monitor your heart rate and rhythm, blood pressure and blood oxygen levels. Your upper chest will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution and sterile drapes placed over your upper chest leaving a small area where your ILR is to be fitted.

You are to have a local anaesthetic which means you will be awake during your procedure. A local anaesthetic drug will be injected into your skin around the site of your procedure to numb the area, so you will only be able to feel pressure but not pain. If needed, extra painkillers can be given; please tell your doctor or nurse if you feel any pain.

A small incision (cut) will be made below your collarbone and a small "pocket" (space) made under your skin for the ILR. When the ILR is in place the wound is closed using dissolvable sutures (stitches) and a sterile dressing is put over the wound.

What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure you will be taken back to your bed to rest for a few hours. We will continue to monitor (check) your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and wound. You will be offered drinks and something to eat.

Your physiologist will see you to explain how to activate (use) the ILR device and answer any questions you may have.

Before you go home your doctor or nurse will see you again and answer any questions you may have.

When can I drive?

You should not drive for 24 hours after the procedure. You should try and avoid placing a seatbelt over the implant site for a few days.

Will I need a follow-up appointment?

You will be given a follow-up appointment to see a physiologist at a clinic to allow your wound to be checked and information to be downloaded from the ILR to check it is working properly. This will be about 5 weeks after your procedure.
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What should I do if I have any symptoms?

The ILR automatically records your heart rhythm and rate but if you feel any symptoms such as dizziness or palpitations you should press your activator switch to tell the ILR to store your heart rhythm to memory.

You should do this within 5 minutes of your symptoms starting, but only if it can be done safely. Once you recover, you should contact the physiologist as soon as possible so he or she can download the information. (See contact numbers at the back of this leaflet.)

The ILR has a limited memory so only activate it if you have symptoms.

Will my loop recorder be affected by household items?

No, you can use all electrical items including a mobile phone as usual.

Will security systems affect my loop recorder?

No, but you will need to tell airport security you have an ILR fitted.

What should I do if I need any hospital tests, treatment or a general anaesthetic?

In most cases this should not be a problem but it is important to tell your doctor or healthcare professional you have an ILR fitted. They will be able to get further information from the clinic.

Contact numbers

If you need further advice, or have any problems, please contact the appropriate number below.

University Hospital of North Tees
Pacemaker Clinic
Cardiac Investigations Unit
telephone: 01642 624500
Monday - Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm

Non-urgent messages can be left at any time on the answering machine.
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Cardiology Day Unit
telephone: 01429 522020
Monday - Thursday, 8.30am - 5.00pm
Friday, 8.30am – 5.00pm, telephone: 01429 522020: if no reply leave a message or
telephone: 01429 522021
(These are Hartlepool codes but you will be diverted to North Tees.)

Non-urgent messages can be left at any time on the answering machine.

University Hospital of Hartlepool

Pacemaker Clinic

Cardiac Investigations Unit
telephone: 01429 522249
Monday - Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm

If you have any worries or concerns you should contact your GP during normal surgery hours. Outside surgery hours you should contact your GP's surgery for the Out of Hours Service number.

Further information is available from:

NHS Choices
telephone: 111 (when it is less urgent than 999)
Calls to this number are free from landlines and mobile phones
or via the website at www.nhs.uk

British Heart Foundation
Greater London House
180 Hampstead Road
London
NW1 7AW
telephone: 020 7554 0000
Heart helpline: 0300 330 3311
Monday - Friday, 9.00am - 5.00pm
or via the website at www.bhf.org.uk

Arrhythmia Alliance
P O Box 3697
Stratford-upon-Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 8YL
telephone: 01789 450 787
24 hours a day, 7 days a week
or via the website at www.arrhythmiaalliance.org.uk
This leaflet has been produced in partnership with patients and carers. All patient leaflets are regularly reviewed, and any suggestions you have as to how it may be improved are extremely valuable. Please write to the Quality Assurance Team, University Hospital of North Tees or email: patientinformation@nth.nhs.uk.

Comments, Concerns, Compliments or Complaints

We are continually trying to improve the services we provide.

We want to know what we’re doing well or if there’s anything which we can improve, that’s why the Patient Experience Team is here to help.

Our Patient Experience Team is here to try to resolve your concerns as quickly as possible. If you would like to contact or request a copy of our PET leaflet, please contact:

telephone: 01642 624719
Monday – Friday, 9.00 am – 4.00 pm
Messages can be left on the answering machine and will be picked up throughout the day.

freephone: 0800 092 0084
Mobile: (can use text): 0779 561 883
Email: patientexperience@nth.nhs.uk

Out of hours if you wish to speak to a senior member of Trust staff, please contact the hospital switchboard who will bleep the appropriate person.

telephone: 01642 617617
24 hours a day, 7 days a week

The Patient Experience Team is available to discuss your concerns in person Monday – Friday, 1.30 pm – 4.30 pm.

Data Protection and use of patient information

The Trust has developed a Data Protection Policy in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1988 and the Freedom of Information Act 2000. All of our staff respect this policy and confidentiality is adhered to at all times. If you require further information please contact the Head of Communications.

telephone: 01642 624339 or www.dataprotection.gov.uk

University Hospital of North Tees, Hardwick, Stockton-on-Tees. TS19 8PE
University Hospital of Hartlepool, Holdforth Road, Hartlepool. TS24 9AH

Telephone: 01642 617617 Fax: 01642 624089