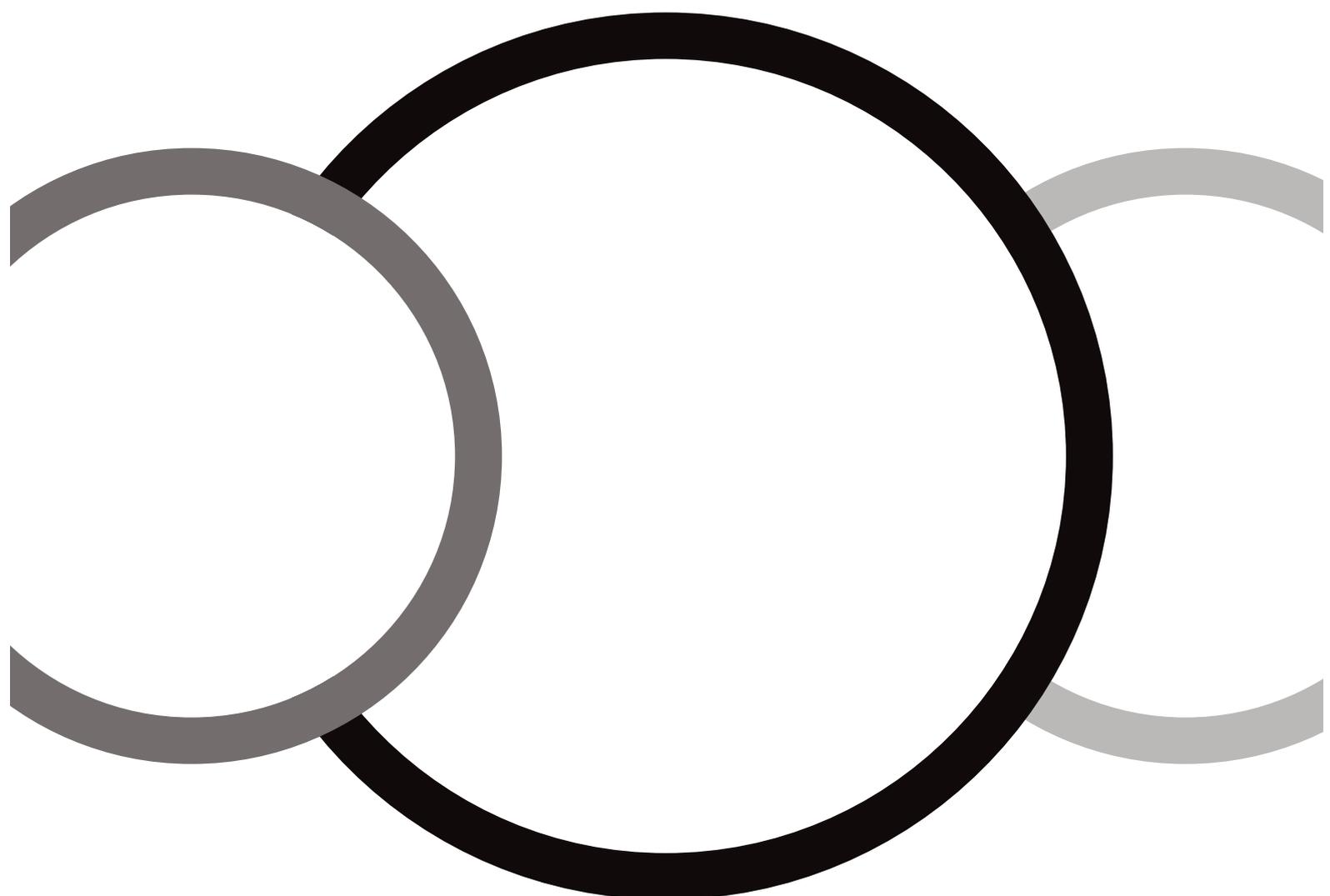


# Cardioversion



*Following your recent discussion with your doctor about treatment for your irregular heart rhythm, it has been arranged for you to have a procedure called a cardioversion.*

*This leaflet will give you information about the procedure and what you can expect.*

*If you have any questions at any time, please ask.*

## **What is a Cardioversion?**

Cardio version is a very common procedure to treat irregular heart rhythms such as atrial fibrillation or atrial flutter.

A controlled electric shock is given into your chest wall, which is synchronised with your own heartbeat. You will not feel the electric shock as you are given an anaesthetic to make you fall asleep.

The procedure is successful in about 90% of patients.

It is more successful when people have had an irregular rhythm for a short time, usually a few months.

You will have your cardio version as a day patient. This means that you will not need to stay in hospital overnight.

## **What happens before the procedure?**

One week before your procedure you will need to visit the hospital for a pre-assessment.

This will be carried out in the Day Surgery Unit at Basildon University Hospital.

A nurse will ask you some questions and confirm your details. They will take a blood test and perform an ECG to confirm that your heart rhythm is still irregular.

You should bring all the medicines that you are currently taking with you to your pre-assessment appointment.

You will be asked to return to the hospital Phlebotomy (Blood Test) Department the day before your procedure for another blood test.

If your results show any problems, the procedure may need to be postponed. We will

telephone you to talk to you about your results if it is necessary to postpone the procedure.

If you are taking any other medication, you will be told at your pre-assessment appointment if you will need to stop taking this before your procedure.

You will need to make arrangements for a friend or relative to collect you from hospital on the day of your procedure, as you will not be able to drive yourself, use public transport or walk home after the anaesthetic.

You will also need to arrange for an adult to stay with you overnight after your cardio version and have immediate access to a telephone. If this is not possible, please tell the nurse at your pre-assessment appointment.

Please remove any make-up and nail varnish before coming to the hospital for your procedure.

Although it is rare, you may need to stay in hospital overnight, so please bring some toiletries,

dressing gown and slippers with you, just in case.

You may also want to bring a book or newspaper with you to help pass the time.

### **What happens on the day of the procedure?**

On the day of the procedure you should not have any breakfast or drink anything after 6am (this includes water).

Please come to the Day Surgery Unit at Basildon University Hospital.

Remember to bring with you any medication that you are currently taking.

Please do not wear any jewellery including body piercings or bring money, credit/debit cards or a mobile phone with you. The hospital cannot accept responsibility for any personal items and valuables.

The Day Surgery Unit has dedicated single sex bays and we will ensure your privacy is respected.

You will be seen by the anaesthetist, who will ensure that

you are fit for the general anaesthetic.

As you will not see the cardiac nurse in pre-assessment, on the day of your procedure you will also be seen by the cardiac nurse practitioner who will make sure that you understand the procedure and ask you to sign the consent form.

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask.

### **What happens during the procedure?**

You will be taken to the operating theatre.

You will be connected to a cardiac monitor so that your heart rhythm can be observed.

The anaesthetist will give you the general anaesthetic into your arm.

A controlled electric shock is given into your chest wall, which is synchronised with your own heartbeat.

You will not feel the electric shock as you will be asleep.

### **What happens after the procedure?**

You will be taken back to the Day Surgery Unit to recover.

You will be able to go home a few hours after the procedure.

We will phone your friend or family member when you are ready to go home.

Before you go home you will be given the results of your procedure.

A letter will be sent to your GP informing them of the procedure, its outcome and any further management that may be necessary.

You will be informed of any change in your medication before you go home.

You will also be told how to care for your skin if there is any soreness/redness.

Once at home you should rest for the remainder of the day.

You must not drink alcohol, take any recreational drugs, drive, operate machinery or sign any legal documents for 24 hours after the procedure.

## **How will I find out if the procedure was a success?**

You will be told whether the procedure has been successful and whether you need any further treatment or follow-up.

If the procedure has not been successful you will be referred back to your Consultant for further management of your condition and you will be given an outpatient follow up appointment for the next available clinic with your consultant

Your Consultant will decide if it is appropriate to attempt another cardio version or for you to continue on medication to control your heart rate. This will be discussed with you and a decision made when you are seen at your follow up appointment regarding any further management.

If the procedure is successful, you should feel less short of breath and have more energy, enabling you to lead a more active life.

## **Are there any side effects or possible complications?**

The general anaesthetic used for the procedure is short-acting. Complications are very rare and can be dealt with by the nurses caring for you.

You may experience some soreness in your chest after the procedure. You will be given pain relief to help this.

You will be on medication which helps to 'thin your blood'. This reduces the risk of a blood clot forming in the heart and travelling to the brain, which reduces the risk of stroke.

Even after a successful procedure, there is a chance that the heart may change back into an irregular rhythm at some time in the future.

If you have any concerns about the procedure, please discuss these with the nurse at your pre-assessment appointment.



## **Are there any alternatives?**

As there are many different reasons why people have an irregular heart rhythm, the alternatives are discussed with each patient based on their individual circumstances.

Alternative procedures will have been discussed with you at your recent appointment with your doctor.

## **Post Discharge Advice**

Even if the procedure is successful, there is a possibility that your heart could revert back to an abnormal heart rhythm after your discharge home. If you experience palpitations or a racing heartbeat, you should arrange to see your GP. If you become acutely unwell and experience chest pains, severe shortness of breath or blackouts you should seek urgent medical attention.

## **Who can I contact if I have any questions?**

If you have any concerns or questions please telephone the Nurse Practitioner on James Mackenzie Ward, on 01268 524900 ext 3430.



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Nethermayne  
Basildon  
Essex SS16 5NL  
☎ 01268 524900 / 0845 155 3111

Minicom  
☎ 01268 593190

Patient Advice and  
Liaison Service (PALS)  
☎ 01268 394440  
E [pals@btuh.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@btuh.nhs.uk)

This booklet can be provided  
in a different format (e.g. large  
print or audio cassette) on request.

W [www.basildonandthurrock.nhs.uk](http://www.basildonandthurrock.nhs.uk)



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