

Cardiac Surgery – Atrial Fibrillation Surgery

Introduction

Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital is one of the busiest cardiac surgery units in the country. The unit sees the second highest number of adult cardiac cases, treating just under 2,000 patients per year including planned and emergency cases.

A total of 16 surgeons provide adult cardiac surgical services that are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and every day of the year.

This guide is designed to provide an overview of **Atrial Fibrillation Surgery**, however, you will find lots of helpful details about our surgical teams, cardiac disease, the types of surgery we provide, as well as useful patient information and resources concerning your stay in hospital, discharge home, frequently asked questions and much more on the Trust website, www.lhch.nhs.uk/our-services

Guidance for Patients

Procedure Information

There are many different treatment options for atrial fibrillation:

- Chemical cardioversion - medicines to correct the irregular heart beat
- DC cardioversion - an electric shock delivered to jump start the heart (usually done with general anaesthetic)
- Rate control - medicines to leave the heart beat irregular but stop it from racing (often used in conjunction with anticoagulation)
- Anticoagulation - medicines to thin the blood to reduce the chances of blood clotting in the heart and therefore reduce the stroke risk
- Catheter ablation - keyhole techniques using needles in the groin to introduce wires to the heart via the blood vessels. These are used to burn away the abnormal electrical conduction systems
- Surgical ablation - cardiac surgery to burn scars into the heart to correct the heart rhythm

Most patients will arrive at the surgical clinics with atrial fibrillation that has either been associated with another heart condition (e.g. heart valve disease) or that is resistant to other forms of treatment. The cardiologists will normally try other treatment options first.

The type of surgery offered for AF depends on a number of factors:

- Underlying cause
- Duration of time in AF
- Swelling of the atria

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

- Previous treatments attempted

A number of different surgical options for atrial fibrillation exist which have varying degrees of invasiveness:

- Open surgery (through a median sternotomy) to burn all affected areas of the heart. This is the most invasive type of AF surgery but also with the highest success rates. It is usually offered in conjunction with other heart surgery e.g. valve surgery.
- Left atrial appendage occlusion (sometimes known as AtriClip or left atrial appendage ligation or amputation) where the blind ending sac in the left atrium most at risk of developing clots is blocked off to reduce stroke risk. This is often used in conjunction with other treatments as it is a quick and low risk addition to the operation.
- Keyhole surgery to burn the most common areas affected from the outside of the heart without using cardiopulmonary bypass
- Keyhole surgery to burn all the key areas affected with irregular rhythm - this requires the heart to be stopped and opened with cardiopulmonary bypass

What should I do if my health is deteriorating?

If you have any change in your symptoms or other concerns whilst waiting for surgery, please contact one of the contacts below.

Urgent Health Advice

For urgent health advice about physical or mental health, when it's not an emergency, please call 111 from any landline or mobile phone. You can also visit www.nhs.uk. The NHS 111 service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Life Threatening Emergencies

For something life threatening – severe bleeding, breathing difficulties or chest pains – please dial 999.

GP surgeries are still open

GP practice staff are also helping patients to manage their conditions at home while they wait for hospital appointments.

GP surgeries are still open and are working differently to how they did before the COVID-19 pandemic and GP practices continue to make best use of telephone, online and video consultations. Face-to-face appointments are still being given to those who need it.

When you phone or use an online form to contact your GP surgery to make an appointment, you will be asked some questions which are designed to help staff guide you to the most appropriate clinical person to help you with your condition. This could be a nurse, clinical pharmacist, physician's associate, GP or paramedic.

Contact Us

Please contact the Hospital switch board on 0151 600 1616 for Appointment team or the Medical Secretaries