

Cardiology – Percutaneous Patent Foramen Ovale (PFO) and Atrial Septal Defect (ASD) Closure

Introduction

Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital's cardiology service is concerned with the diagnosis and treatment of all heart diseases.

As we offer a variety of surgical and interventional treatments, many patients are referred to LHCH by cardiologists from local district hospitals as well as from GPs.

Our services include:

- Adult Congenital Heart Disease
- Interventional Cardiology - treating the narrowing or blockages of the coronary arteries.
- Heart Rhythm Management - treating problems with the heart's electrical rhythm.
- Inherited Cardiac Conditions
- Percutaneous Coronary Intervention
- Sudden Cardiac Arrest

These areas are underpinned by our diagnostic cardiology service.

This guide is designed to provide an overview of **PFO and ASD Closure**, 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

What is PFO?

PFO is Percutaneous Patent Foramen Ovale, which is a hole that babies have in their heart when they are in the womb, but that usually closes naturally after birth. However, in as many as one in four people, it does not close completely and remains 'patent' (open) into adulthood.

The hole is in the wall that divides the upper two chambers in the heart which collect the blood returning from the body. In most people the hole does not cause any problems, but in some people it can lead to strokes. In carefully selected patients it is advisable to have the hole closed with a small device that is passed up to the heart from a vein the groin. The procedure is performed at low risk and can generally be performed as a day case under local or general anaesthesia.

My Planned Care Patient Information Platform

What is ASD?

An ASD (Atrial Septal Defect Closure) is a congenital abnormality, present at birth, and characterised by a hole in the wall (septum) between the two top chambers of the heart. It is similar to a PFO but is larger. This abnormality occurs during the formation of the heart. It is often not discovered until adulthood when it may cause symptoms or is found incidentally.

With ASD, blood can flow through the hole from the left atrium (where the pressure is normally higher) into the right atrium. The extra blood can then go to the lungs and result in shortness of breath, heart rhythm disturbances (atrial fibrillation), stroke and pulmonary hypertension (high blood pressure in the lungs). For this reason it is generally recommended that ASDs are closed. Many are closed percutaneously and often as a day case. In some circumstances surgery may be required.

Suitable ASDs measuring less than 40mm can often be closed using a double-disc device shaped like a double-sided umbrella. The procedure is carried out under a general anaesthetic in the catheterisation laboratory under ultrasound guidance with X-ray screening. The device is passed through a long tube (catheter) from the femoral vein at the top of the leg, up into the heart. The device is then positioned across the hole in the heart. Eventually the heart tissue will grow over the device and it will become part of the heart wall. Patients cannot feel the device when it is in place.

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