



**Royal Berkshire**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Coming in for a cardioversion

Information for patients

Jim Shahi Unit

Tel: 0118 322 6502

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This booklet has been produced by the staff to help answer some of the questions you may have about your DC cardioversion. It is only a general guide and may not answer all of your questions. Please ask the doctors or nurses if you have any particular questions. There is a blank page at the back of this booklet if you wish to write them down.

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### What is a DC cardioversion?

You have been put on the waiting list to have a DC cardioversion. DC cardioversion is a method of returning your irregular heartbeat into a normal rhythm. This works by delivering a low energy electric shock to your heart using special pads on your chest. You will not need an anaesthetic but you will be given a sedative to make you sleepy.

The procedure is carried out as a day case and you will be taken care of by our specialist nurses in the Jim Shahi Unit. You will be discharged home approximately 2hours following your procedure.

### Why do I need DC cardioversion?

The heart has an electrical system which makes sure that the chambers of the heart beat in a regular manner. Although the heart's pumping function may be normal, it will not work properly if there are electrical defects resulting in the heart beating too fast, or irregularly. An awareness of a rapid rhythm is often called "palpitation" and the rapid rhythm itself is called a tachycardia.

## Before your procedure

A few days before your appointment you will need to have some blood taken to test for INR and potassium levels. Take the form sent to you with your appointment letter to the Pathology Department at the Royal Berkshire Hospital (Level 2, South Block) or visit your own GP. Please make sure you also take your yellow anticoagulation book with you or the latest result letter you have received from the anticoagulation department. If you are taking Dabigatran, Apixaban or Rivaroxaban please inform the Appointments Officer of the date you started taking it. You should not drive after the procedure so please make sure you arrange for a responsible adult to accompany you home.

CLEAR WATER IS PERMITTED 2 HOURS PRIOR TO YOUR ADMISSION. NO FOOD FROM MIDNIGHT.

## On the day of your procedure

You will be asked to attend the Jim Shahi Unit on Level 1 Battle Block at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

Please bring with you:

- Any regular medication in its original packaging (you can continue to take your tablets as normal on the day of your appointment).
- Your anticoagulation INR results letter.

On arrival you will have an ECG (heart trace) to confirm you are in the correct rhythm to have a cardioversion.

The Jim Shahi Unit is an emergency department and there maybe unforeseen delays. Please bring something to read or occupy your time.

## Just before the procedure

- A member of staff will check your name and details.
- We will check your blood results to see if they are within the correct limits for a cardioversion.
- A cannula (small plastic tube) will be put into a vein in your hand or arm. The sedative will be given through this tube.
- Your blood pressure and pulse will be recorded.
- We will tell you again what will happen during the procedure and the doctor will ask you to sign a consent form.

## What happens during the procedure?

- You will be taken to the procedure room on your bed.
- Monitoring leads will be attached to your shoulders and chest to watch your heart rate.
- We will place a probe on your finger to monitor the oxygen levels in your blood.
- An oxygen mask will be put over your mouth and nose.
- We will give you a sedative through the tube in your arm and you will gradually relax and fall asleep.
- Two large defibrillation pads will be stuck onto your chest and you will be given up to three low-energy electric shocks.
- Another heart trace will be carried out to confirm your heart rhythm is okay.
- The whole procedure will take about 20 minutes.

## After the procedure

- You will be moved back to the ward on your bed.
- Your pulse and blood pressure will be monitored until you are back to normal.
- You may feel slightly drowsy and you will need a responsible adult to take you home.
- You may experience a slight skin irritation in the areas on your chest where the electric shocks were given. If this happens, we can give you some soothing cream.
- When you feel more awake you will be offered something to eat and drink.
- The doctor will visit you to give you your results and to let you know of any necessary changes to your medication.
- You may be given a follow-up outpatient appointment depending on your result.
- Please continue with your *Warfarin*/oral anti-coagulant unless the doctor advises you otherwise.
- Please remember, you must not drive for 12 hours after the procedure.

## Recognised risks

Risks from a cardioversion are very small. The most common complication is skin redness over the chest area. This can be relieved with a skin cream, which will be given to you if required.

There is a very small risk of having a stroke. However providing blood-thinning treatment has been given satisfactorily before hand, the risk of this happening is 1 in every 200 patients. There is also a rare incidence of extreme bradycardia which may require temporary pacing.

If the procedure is successful you are usually given a Cardiology

follow-up appointment. When you come to clinic you will have an ECG to confirm that you are still in 'normal rhythm'. If you are, you may be allowed to discontinue your warfarin/anti-coagulant.

## Useful contacts

|                           |   |
|---------------------------|---|
| Royal Berkshire Hospital  | 0118 322 5111   |
| Jim Shahi Unit            | 0118 322 6502   |
| Cardiac Appointments      | 0118 322 6676   |
| Cardiac Support Nurses    | 0118 322 6638   |
| Cardiac Care Unit         | 0118 322 6684   |
| Trust website:            | <u><a href="http://www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk">www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk</a></u> |
| NHS 111:                  | 111   |
| NHS Choices website:      | <u><a href="http://www.nhs.uk">www.nhs.uk</a></u>                               |
| British Heart Foundation: | <u><a href="http://www.bhf.org.uk">www.bhf.org.uk</a></u>                       |

### West Berkshire Heart Support Group – 'Heartbeats'

The local heart support group hold regular monthly meetings in Reading, Earley and Newbury. For details see Heartbeats magazine, posters or ask nursing staff for details.

Heartbeats website: [www.heartbeats-berkshire.co.uk](http://www.heartbeats-berkshire.co.uk)

## Cardiac Fund

The Cardiac Fund was set up with the purpose of providing cardiac services which may not otherwise be available through NHS resources. Our Cardiac Laboratory (Jim Shahi Unit) was largely equipped through the fund and many other areas in the department have also benefitted from equipment and staff training. In order to expand these facilities and to remain up to date with the technological advances, further donations are greatly needed and appreciated.

## How to donate

You can donate to the Cardiac Fund U226 in a number of ways (please ensure you quote the fund code U226 when making a donation):

- Cheques: Please make your cheques payable to the 'Royal Berks Charity Cardiac Fund U226 and post to: Royal Berks Charity, South Block Annexe, Royal Berkshire Hospital, London Road, Reading RG1 5AN. Please include your address details so we can acknowledge receipt of your donation and, if applicable, we can send you a Gift Aid form to further boost your donation if you are a UK taxpayer.
- Cash: If you wish to donate by cash, please bring your donation directly to the Charity Office or leave with Main Reception along with your contact details. The Charity Office is located upstairs in South Block Annexe.

**For safety reasons, please do not send cash in the post.**

- Credit and debit card: We accept donations through all major credit and debit cards. Please call us on 0118 322 8860 and quote Cardiac Fund U226.
- Online: To donate please visit [www.royalberkshirecharity.co.uk](http://www.royalberkshirecharity.co.uk) and click on the 'Donate' button. In the message box please quote Cardiac Fund U226.

Notes:



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This document can be made available in other languages  
and formats upon request.

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