

PATIENT INFORMATION

Implantable Loop Recorder

Cardiac Physiology Department

What is an implantable loop recorder?

An implantable loop recorder (or ILR) is a small, rectangular device that records the electrical activity of your heart. Loop recorders are placed under the skin, usually on the left side of your chest.

Why do I need an implantable loop recorder?

Sometimes people experience symptoms such as:

- Dizzy spells
- Blackouts
- Palpitations (when your heart beats very fast, it might feel like its pounding or fluttering)

These symptoms might happen when you're being active or resting and may not happen very often, but they can feel worrying.

If the cause of your symptoms can't be explained by an ECG test or standard heart monitoring (usually over 1 or 2 days), an ILR may be suggested by the medical team.

How does an implantable loop recorder work?

Loop recorders continuously monitor your heart rate and the rhythm of your heart, like a longer version of the standard heart monitoring tests you may have already had. They pick up the electrical signals from your heart and recognise if your heart rate or rhythm are abnormal. The information is then recorded and stored in its memory for your medical team to review.

When your device recognises something unusual, it will either begin recording your heart's activity automatically, or you might need to:

- manually start the recording using a small, hand-held activator machine when you feel symptoms
- use a mobile phone app to manually record the activity.

The recording will be sent to your medical team automatically using a small bedside monitoring machine you might be given, or an app.

How do I prepare for an implantable loop recorder procedure?

You won't have to do anything special to prepare for the procedure to have your loop recorder fitted before the day. The procedure is quick and simple, but you might feel a bit nervous.

You don't need to be nil by mouth, eat and drink as normal. Ideally make sure that you drink fluids before you attend to prevent being dehydrated.

You can take your normal medication unless you have been told otherwise.

Don't apply any moisturising cream to your chest on the morning of the procedure.

How is an implantable loop recorder fitted?

The procedure to fit your ILR device takes about 10 to 15 minutes, and it will usually happen in an outpatient setting

- you will be given a local anaesthetic to numb the area, this means you will be awake, but you won't feel any pain.
- a small cut (roughly one centimetre) will be made on the mid left side of your chest.
- the implantable loop recorder will be injected under the skin.
- the cut will typically be closed with either a special type of glue or a couple of skin closure strips.

Are there any risks?

The procedure is simple and very common; many people have a heart monitor fitted every day. The risks are low but as with any procedure, there are risks such as bleeding, bruising and infection.

There is also a small chance of the device moving a little bit on the left side of your chest. The device can move slightly because it isn't secured in a set position. It is okay for your device to move slightly as long as it doesn't feel uncomfortable, and it can still record your heart's activity. If your device feels uncomfortable or you are worried about the movement, contact your healthcare team.

For some people the risks can be worrying, if you are concerned you can talk to your implanter about it before your loop recorder is fitted. Your implanter will understand your concerns and be able to answer any questions you might have. They will explain the risks to you before you give your consent to have the loop recorder fitted.

What can I expect from the recovery?

If you feel well (your chest may feel a bit bruised or sore) you can go home and spend the rest of the day as you normally would. You may need to limit your upper body movement for a few days to allow your cut and any bruising to heal. You may need to keep the dressing over your cut on and keep it dry for around one week.

When your implanter is happy for you to go home, they will give you all the information you need to know about the type of ILR you have as well as the manufacturer information. You may also be given a hand-held activator and a bedside monitor if your device needs it, your implanter will talk you through the steps on how and when to use them. They will also answer any questions you might have about your recovery.

Can I do day-to-day activities while I have one?

When you have an implantable loop recorder, you will be able to do everything you normally would, like go to work or the gym. If your symptoms before your ILR was fitted didn't stop you from driving, playing sports or using equipment, you will be allowed to do those activities once your ILR is fitted.

Once your ILR is fitted and you return to your day-to-day activities, if you feel any symptoms, make a note of what you were doing, where it happened and when, and use your hand-held activator/app if you have it with you.

What do I do when I travel abroad?

You can go abroad like you normally would with a heart monitor. You will be given a device identification card which you should carry with you when you travel. You can go through airport security scanners safely, but you may need to show your card if you set off the metal detectors.

If you were given a bedside monitor to keep at home, take this with you and keep it by your bedside as you would at home, if possible.

I have questions about my loop recorder, where can I get help?

If you have questions about your implantable loop recorder, your activator, or your bedside monitor, you can refer to the information booklet that will come with your devices for answers, or you can contact your medical team.

Cardiac Physiologists answer phone: 01803 654464

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

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