

# Atrial fibrillation ablation

Your doctor has recommended you undergo a procedure called an atrial fibrillation ablation.

You might not have heard this medical term before now and might be feeling unsure about the nature of the procedure.

This information sheet outlines what the procedure is and what preparations and risks are involved.

After you read this information sheet, you might still have questions. If you do, please contact the team at Heart HQ. We're here to help.

## 1. What's an atrial fibrillation ablation?

If you suffer from an abnormal heart rhythm, it may be caused by a condition called atrial fibrillation (AF). One method of treatment is a technique called ablation. Ablation delivers electrical energy to the inside of your heart to change abnormal tissues. The heat energy from ablation cuts off the abnormal pathways in the heart to prevent abnormal heart rhythms.

As your doctor will explain to you, this procedure doesn't guarantee relief from an abnormal heart rhythm. Approximately 50% to 70% of these procedures are successful, while 30% to 50% of patients may need to have the procedure again.

## 2. How does it work?

An intravenous line (IV) will be placed into a vein in your arm. This is for the medical team to administer medication throughout your procedure. You will receive an injection of local anaesthetic before catheters (very fine tubes) will be placed into a vein in your groin. A sedative will also be given.

Your doctor will carefully pass the catheters through the vein into your heart. Your doctor can see the catheters by using x-rays.

Your doctor will locate your abnormal heartbeat in a particular area of the heart. The ablation catheters can 'burn' that part of the heart muscle and cause a scar to this area of the heart. It may take several attempts to scar the area. When the scar forms, this will cut off the abnormal pathway and prevent further irregular heartbeats.

The ablation described above will then take place. While this happens, you may feel a mild burning sensation in your chest while the abnormal pathway is being cut off. This burning feeling will go away when the ablation stops.

## 3. What kind of risks are associated with this procedure?

Any kind of procedure carries some element of risk, often very small and rare.

Your doctor has balanced the benefits and risks of carrying out the test against the benefits and risks of not proceeding. If your doctor has recommended this procedure, they believe there is benefit to you going ahead.

It's important you understand the risks involved so you can make an informed decision.

## World-class cardiac care

 07 5414 1100  07 5414 1101  [admin@hearthq.com.au](mailto:admin@hearthq.com.au)

**Heart HQ Central Sippy Downs**  
Suite 5, Atria  
44 Central Drive  
Sippy Downs QLD 4556

**Birtinya**  
Suite 4, Ground Floor  
Sunshine Coast University  
Private Hospital  
3 Doherty Street  
Birtinya QLD 4575

**Noosa-Tewantin**  
Suite 1  
66 Poinciana Avenue  
Tewantin QLD 4565

**Gympie**  
Ramsay Medical  
Consulting Suites  
70-72 Channon Street  
Gympie QLD 4570

**Buderim**  
Buderim Private Hospital  
12 Elsa Wilson Drive  
Buderim QLD 4556

**Caboolture**  
Consulting Suites  
Caboolture Private Hospital  
McKean Street  
Caboolture QLD 4510

**Nambour**  
Nambour Selangor  
Private Hospital  
62 Netherton Street  
Nambour QLD 4560

### Common risks and complications (more than 5% of cases):

- Minor bruising at the puncture site

### Uncommon risks and complications (1–5% of cases):

- Other arrhythmia developed
- A hole accidentally punctured in the heart or heart valve—this may require drainage or surgery to repair
- Chest pain
- Major bruising or swelling at the puncture site—in rare cases this may require surgery
- A stroke—this may cause long term disability
- Blood clot in the leg (DVT) causing pain and swelling—in rare cases the clot may break off and travel to the lungs
- Skin injury from radiation—this may cause reddening
- A higher lifetime risk from exposure to radiation
- Pericarditis—inflammation of the heart sack which can cause chest pain for some weeks after the procedure

### Rare risks and complications (less than 1% of cases):

- Narrowing of the veins from the lungs to the heart—this is serious and may require further procedures
- Heart attack
- Damage to the phrenic nerve that controls the diaphragm (breathing muscle)
- Atrial oesophageal fistula—a hole forms between the gullet and heart. This can cause vomiting of blood and a stroke. This can be life threatening.
- Death as a result of this procedure is rare

### Our commitment to you

As a patient of Heart HQ, you can be assured we will always strive to act in your best interests and we will only recommend tests and procedures we believe will benefit you.

Everyone has questions, and we want to answer yours. Please contact your doctor to talk over any concerns you might have.

## World-class cardiac care

 07 5414 1100  07 5414 1101  [admin@hearthq.com.au](mailto:admin@hearthq.com.au)

**Heart HQ Central  
Sippy Downs**  
Suite 5, Atria  
44 Central Drive  
Sippy Downs QLD 4556

**Birtinya**  
Suite 4, Ground Floor  
Sunshine Coast University  
Private Hospital  
3 Doherty Street  
Birtinya QLD 4575

**Noosa–Tewantin**  
Suite 1  
66 Poinciana Avenue  
Tewantin QLD 4565

**Gympie**  
Ramsay Medical  
Consulting Suites  
70–72 Channon Street  
Gympie QLD 4570

**Buderim**  
Buderim Private Hospital  
12 Elsa Wilson Drive  
Buderim QLD 4556

**Caboolture**  
Consulting Suites  
Caboolture Private Hospital  
McKean Street  
Caboolture QLD 4510

**Nambour**  
Nambour Selangor  
Private Hospital  
62 Netherton Street  
Nambour QLD 4560