

Cardioversion

You have been scheduled for cardioversion on _____ at _____.

This sheet will answer some questions you may have about cardioversion.

What is cardioversion?

Cardioversion uses an electrical shock to restore a normal heartbeat.

Cardioversion is thought to work by briefly stopping the electrical activity of the heart and its irregular rhythm. This often allows a normal heartbeat to take over.

Why do I need cardioversion?

Your heart is beating irregularly (dysrhythmia). This means that you do not have a normal heart rhythm. The dysrhythmia you have is called *atrial fibrillation/atrial flutter*.

Atrial fibrillation happens when the electrical signals in the upper chambers of your heart (the atria) travel very fast and in an uncontrolled manner through your heart. This makes the lower chambers of your heart (the ventricles) pump irregularly.

Atrial fibrillation is caused by abnormal electrical signals in your heart. It can cause small blood clots to form in your heart. These clots can cause a heart attack or a stroke (brain damage).

Cardioversion is done when medications cannot make your heartbeat return to normal.

How do I prepare for cardioversion?

Four to six weeks before your cardioversion, you may be put on a medication called Coumadin (warfarin). Coumadin is a blood thinner. It helps prevent clots from forming.

Arrange to have someone drive you to the hospital for your cardioversion, drive you back home, and stay with you for 24 hours after the cardioversion.

Do not eat or drink anything after midnight, the night before your cardioversion. You may take your medications with a sip of water.

Report to the _____ on the ____ floor at your scheduled time.

(over)

Your doctor and nurse will discuss the cardioversion with you and answer any questions you have. Then you will be asked to sign a consent form. This form gives the doctor your permission to do the cardioversion.

What should I expect during the cardioversion?

An intravenous (IV) line will be placed in your arm before the cardioversion. An IV line is a small plastic tube used to give your medications during the cardioversion.

You may not remember having the cardioversion because you will be given medicine that will put you to sleep before the cardioversion is done.

You may wear an oxygen mask to help you breathe easier. Electrocardiogram (EKG) patches and wires are put on your chest so your heart rhythm can be watched.

What happens after the cardioversion?

You will be observed for _____ hours after your cardioversion. If there are no complications, you will be able to go home. You will need to have an adult drive you home and stay with you for the next 24 hours. If your heart rhythm does not return to normal, your doctor will discuss other options with you.

You may be started on medication that will help keep your heart rhythm regular.

You will be scheduled for a follow-up appointment in the Cardiac Clinic.

If you have any questions or problems after you get home, please call Telephone Care Communications System (TCCS) at (612) 725-2242, Monday through Friday, between 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. At any other time, call Urgent Care at (612) 467-2771.

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