

Direct Current Cardioversion

What is a Direct Current Cardioversion (DCR)?

DCR is a procedure used to convert an abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia) back to a normal (sinus) rhythm. Also known as electrical cardioversion, a DCR delivers a short electrical current directly to the heart to restore normal rhythm.

Why do I need a DCR?

The most likely reason your Cardiologist has suggested that you require a DCR is because you have an abnormal heart rhythm (arrhythmia) such as atrial flutter or atrial fibrillation that has not been effectively treated with medication. During the arrhythmias, the upper chambers of the heart beat very fast or quiver. This abnormal beating leads to ineffective circulation of the blood around the body and can cause symptoms including palpitations, dizziness, shortness of breath and tiredness. In some patients, the arrhythmia can affect other heart functions.

This procedure is undertaken while you are in hospital, under anaesthetic.

How do I prepare for the DCR?

As this procedure is undertaken in hospital you will need to complete your admission paperwork, which the Nepean Cardiology staff will provide to you, and return to Peninsula Private Hospital at least three days prior to your admission date. This paperwork can be submitted online if you'd prefer.

You will need to fast for six hours prior to the admission time however any medications you need to take can be taken with a sip of water. There is no need to cease taking any medications, including Cardiac Medications, unless specified by your Cardiologist. Please continue taking any blood thinners. Please bring a list or current medications, or the medication bottles with you to the hospital.

It is a good idea to have someone drive you to the hospital at your advised admission time as you will not be able to drive yourself or take a taxi alone after the procedure.

What should I expect on the day of the DCR?

The DCR procedure takes around 20 to 30 minutes. After it is completed you will remain in hospital for at least two hours to ensure you are fully awake and your Blood Pressure and Oxygen levels are normal. During this time you will have a 12-lead ECG performed to ensure your heart has returned to Sinus Rhythm.

What happens afterwards?

You may continue to feel lethargic after the procedure as the effects of the sedation may remain for a number of hours. You will need someone to drive you home and stay with you overnight. If you are unable to arrange this please let our staff know and we will arrange for your overnight admission to the hospital.

Your Cardiologist will arrange a follow up appointment four to six weeks after your procedure.