

CARDIOVERSION

Cardioversion is a procedure that is used to restore a regular heart rhythm. There are two types of cardioversion: **electrical**, which involves the delivery of a shock to the heart, and **pharmacological (chemical)**, in which medication is used to chemically restore the heart's regular rhythm. Cardioversion may be considered for a fast and/or an irregular rhythm that is causing symptoms. It may also be used to treat life-threatening arrhythmias. Sometimes your doctor may use a combination of both types of cardioversions to try to restore a normal rhythm. Depending on the medication being administered, chemical cardioversion alone may occur as an inpatient or an outpatient.

Electrical cardioversion is performed in the hospital, under the close supervision of a cardiologist and nursing staff. It is an outpatient procedure and you should be expected to return home on the same day. During electrical cardioversion you will be given medication to make you sleepy. You should not feel pain during the procedure. Your doctor will deliver an electrical shock to your heart through two special paddles that are attached to your skin. The shock lasts less than a second, and briefly stops (resets) your heart rhythm. In most cases, patients wake up quickly and do not remember the shock.

Certain arrhythmias like atrial flutter and atrial fibrillation are associated with blood clot formation in the left atrium of the heart. Performing a cardioversion under these circumstances may dislodge the clot from the heart to the brain and cause a stroke. For this reason, you may be required to have a **Transesophageal Echocardiogram (TEE)** prior to the cardioversion. The instructions for electrical cardioversion are similar as those for TEE.