

Guide to Ablation and Electrophysiology Studies

Electrophysiology (EP) studies and ablations are invasive procedures used to diagnose and treat cardiac arrhythmias. EP studies refer to the diagnostic part of the procedure during which an arrhythmia is initiated. The ablation refers to the therapeutic procedure that treats the arrhythmia. The type of procedure will determine whether it is performed on an outpatient basis and whether an overnight hospital stay or a longer stay is needed.

Most EP studies and catheter ablations are performed with local anesthesia and a sedative, but some require general anesthesia.

Preparing for the Procedure

- Do not eat any food or drink any fluids after midnight the day before your test.
- Ask your doctor if you should take your medications the day of the procedure.
- You will receive local anesthesia as well as a sedative or anesthesia. If you receive general anesthesia, you will stay in the hospital overnight. If you are told in advance that you may go home after your procedure, a family member or friend must be available to accompany you home. No exceptions can be made to this requirement.

During the Procedure

- You will be taken to a pre-procedure room by one of our nurses. A physician or nurse practitioner will discuss your history and the procedure with you.
- If you are a woman of childbearing age, a urine pregnancy test will be performed.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form.
- After you change into a hospital gown, an intravenous line (IV) will be placed in your forearm. A blood pressure monitor will be placed on your arm, and ECG stickers will be placed on your chest to monitor your heart rhythm. Large patches will be placed on your chest and back.
- While lying comfortably on your back in the procedure bed. The nurses will clean the sites at the groin and neck where catheters will be placed, and a sterile drape will be positioned from your chin to your toes.
- You then will be given anesthesia through your IV. Local anesthesia will be injected under the skin where the catheters will be placed.
- The catheters then will be inserted and the wires carefully positioned in the heart under X-ray guidance.
- Next, the EP study and, if applicable, ablation will be performed. The duration of this portion of the procedure varies widely.
- When the procedure is completed, the wires and catheters will be removed from your veins and gentle pressure will be applied to the sites for several minutes.
- You will then be taken to your hospital room or the recovery room. There, the physician who performed your procedure will discuss the results with you.

After the Procedure

- You must lie flat for four hours following catheter removal to allow the veins to heal appropriately.
- You may eat as soon as you are awake following the procedure.
- If you are scheduled to go home the same day, a family member or friend must accompany you home. No exceptions can be made to this policy. You cannot operate a motor vehicle or heavy machinery for the remainder of the day.

After You Go Home

- Refrain from heavy lifting (no more than 10 pounds), stretching, or vigorous activity for 24 hours after the procedure.
- You may shower, but do not sit in a hot bath for 5 days (to allow the catheter insertion sites to heal).
- If you develop a fever, swelling, or bleeding at the catheter sites or down the leg; if you experience any rapid heartbeats, fainting, near fainting episodes, or shortness of breath; or if you have any questions, please call our office (212) 746-2158. A physician is available at all times.

✉ Contact

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