

Implantable Loop Recorder



Typically for extensive evaluation of patients with symptoms potentially related to arrhythmia.

What is an implantable loop recorder?

Some heart rhythm disorders can cause symptoms like syncope (extreme fainting), light-headedness, dizziness or palpitations — but often these symptoms are infrequent, and difficult to diagnose and treat accurately because they happen during your daily life rather than while you're at your doctor's office or undergoing medical tests.

An implantable loop recorder [ILR] continuously records the heart's electrical activity just like an electrocardiogram [ECG], and can store the pattern of activity that happens before, during and after an "event." By analyzing the stored data, your doctor can determine whether arrhythmia is the cause, and monitor or treat your heart accordingly.

What does it treat?

- An ILR is used to help diagnose and monitor symptoms like syncope (extreme fainting), light-headedness, dizziness or heart palpitations.

Facts about implantable loop recorders

- ILR implantation is performed in a hospital with the patient sedated.
- The ILR implantation procedure typically takes about an hour.
- As with any procedure, there are risks. Of course, every precaution is taken to reduce risks. Your doctor will talk with you about the potential risks of the procedure.
- Your doctor or Nurse Navigator/educator will provide you with detailed directions about how to prepare for your ILR in terms of your medications, diet, etc.

What happens during the procedure?

- You will be lying down, and a nurse will hook you up to an IV, which will deliver fluids and a sedative.
- The doctor will numb an area of your upper chest, and make a small incision where the implantable loop recorder will be inserted.
- The ILR — about the size of a pack of gum — is placed under the skin in your upper chest.
- Once the monitor is in place, the doctor will test it to ensure it's located correctly, working properly.
- Once the implant is complete, the doctor will close the incision.

3000 NORTH IH 35, SUITE 720
AUSTIN, TX 78705
TOLL-FREE 877.887.7737
512.544.2342

TCAINSTITUTE.COM

What will you feel?

- You might feel a slight burning or pinching sensation when the numbing medication is injected.
- You might feel a tugging sensation when the doctor forms a pocket within the tissue under your skin for the implantable loop recorder.
- You should not feel pain during the procedure. If you do, then tell your nurse immediately.
- You might feel discomfort at the implant site for the first 48 hours following the procedure. If discomfort persists or becomes severe, or if you develop signs of infection while your incision is healing, call your doctor.

What happens afterward?

- Once you're fully awake, your doctor will talk with you and your loved ones about the procedure and its results.
 - You will probably be able to go home the same day.
 - Arrange for a ride to and from the hospital, and for help at home following the procedure.
 - The implantable loop recorder comes with a handheld activator you must keep with you at all times. During or just after a symptomatic event occurs, you or someone with you holds the activator over your ILR and presses a button. This tells the ILR to store recent and current heart activity information for your doctor to analyze later.
 - You will also receive a temporary ID card that indicates the type of device you have and your doctor's information. Carry this card with you at all times, in case you require medical care.
 - The ILR can continuously record your heart's rhythm and rate up to 14 months, and can be inserted in your body up to three years. Once your doctor examines your data and is satisfied that arrhythmia can be ruled either in or out as a cause, the device can then be removed.
 - You will need to take extra care in some everyday situations while you have an ILR:
 - wireless communication equipment is fine to use, but avoid talking on your mobile or cell phone on the same side as your monitor, and don't carry a wireless device in a pocket or purse close to your monitor;
 - electronic security systems, like at the airport, are fine to pass through, but avoid the magnetic wand sometimes used during security checks — you should let the security agent know you have a heart monitor, and you might have to show them your ID card; and
 - prior to undergoing any medical procedure, you must let your doctor or technician know you have an ILR. Some procedures — such as Magnetic Resonance Imaging [MRI] scans, radiation therapy, electrocautery or Transcutaneous Electrical Nerve Stimulation [TENS] — might require extra precautions.
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