

Catheter Ablation for SVT: Before Your Procedure

The heart has its own electrical system that helps keep the heart in rhythm and helps control how fast it beats. SVT, or supraventricular tachycardia, is a very fast heartbeat. It usually happens because your heart's electrical system isn't working right.

Catheter ablation is a procedure that destroys the tissue that's causing the SVT. These areas are usually tiny. And destroying them does not affect the heart's ability to do its job.

First you'll get medicine that may make you sleep or feel sleepy so you won't feel pain during the procedure. The doctor may make a small cut called an incision—or it might be just a small poke—in a blood vessel in your arm or groin, on the upper thigh. And then a thin tube called a catheter will go into the blood vessel.

Then the doctor moves the catheter through the blood vessel to the heart. To guide the catheter, your doctor looks at pictures of your heart using an X-ray. The catheter records the electrical signals in the heart.

The doctor will use a type of energy such as radio waves to destroy—or ablate—those places that are causing the problem. When finished, your doctor removes the catheter. You'll stay in a recovery room for a few hours. This is to make sure that the catheter site has healed enough to stop any bleeding.

The nurse may use something like a weighted bag to put pressure on the catheter site to keep it from bleeding. Before the procedure, tell your doctor about all the medicines and natural health products you take, especially blood thinners, like aspirin. Some can raise the risk of bleeding or cause problems with anesthesia.

Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before your procedure. And follow your doctor's directions for preparing for your procedure, including when you should stop eating and drinking.

Bring your photo ID, insurance card, and any paperwork your hospital may have asked for. Preparing for a catheter ablation may be stressful. But knowing what to expect and how to prepare can help.

And if you have any questions or concerns, you can always call your doctor.