

## Living with... Supraventricular Tachycardia (SVT) Frequently Asked Questions Dr Benjamin Steinberg

### Is there a correlation between both male and female hormones and SVT?

It is known that high levels of testosterone in men, and progesterone \ oestrogen in women during ovulation and pregnancy can influence the electrical conduction within the heart. It is advisable to contact your doctor if you have any concerns.

### When should I seek emergency medical advice?

If you experience an episode over a prolonged period, such as one to two hours, then you should seek urgent medical advice. If you have experienced severe bouts of light-headedness, repeated faints or lose consciousness, contact 999.

### Can SVT weaken my heart and shorten my life expectancy?

SVT affects the electrical connections of the heart, although they can feel troublesome, it does not mean it can affect the overall structure of your heart. SVT does not impact the longevity of your heart and shorten your life expectancy.

### Are there any other conditions that can 'mimic' SVT?

Symptoms such as palpitations, a rapid heart rate and breathlessness can mimic other conditions of the heart or lungs, it is important to not ignore the symptoms and speak to your doctor for further assistance to aim for a swift diagnosis.

### Can stress or emotions trigger SVT? What advice can you offer to help?

It is known that stress can cause panic and anxiety. Stimulants such as caffeine, dehydration and fatigue can also stimulate the heart. If you experience an episode of SVT, you may wish to practice deep breathing exercises or the *Valsalva Manoeuvre* to help control the heart and slow your heart rate and lower your blood pressure:

- Lie down flat on the floor
- Elevate your legs up on a chair
- Lift your legs
- Take a deep breath and push down and hold for five seconds and repeat

If you have any concerns, then discuss this with your doctor. They will be able to provide advice and help on a personal basis.

### What is a ICM \ ILR?

An ICM, Insertable Cardiac Monitor (formerly referred to as an ILR (Implantable Loop Recorder). It is a small thin device inserted into the subcutaneous (just under the skin) tissue to record your heart's activity under a local anaesthetic.



## How is the ICM inserted, and will the procedure create a scar?

The incision made is very small and therefore once healed it will leave a minimal wound. It will be inserted just above your left breast.

## How long will I need an ICM?

The ICM can be inserted for up to four years. The battery will be checked periodically. You will receive an ICM if you have experienced syncope (faints) or loss of consciousness. You may also be offered one if you experience asymptomatic episodes of SVT. This will detect when these are happening for your doctor, so they are able to provide the correct treatment option for you.

## How is the ICM removed?

The ICM is removed in a very similar process used to insert it, once again the area around to wound will be numbed using a local anaesthetic. The wound is re-opened, and the device removed.

## How long does the insertion \ removal procedure take?

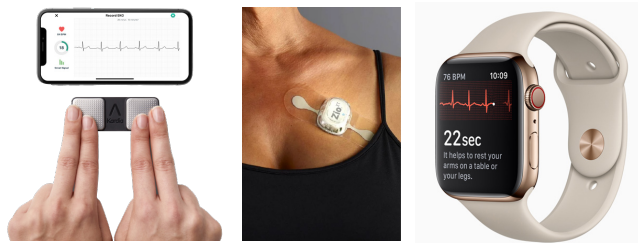
It is a very quick procedure and will take no longer than five to ten minutes. You can leave once you feel well enough and will not require a long stay in hospital.

## What data will the ICM provide?

It will be monitoring and recording the rhythm of your heart 24/7 and will automatically collate any information for your doctor. This can lead to a swift diagnosis.

## How do I know which portable ECG monitor to purchase?

There are many devices available, however, it is recommended to purchase those that have been approved by NICE in the UK. The devices can record an ECG whenever you experience an episode. You also can share the ECG with your doctor. Once again, this will help provide a swift diagnosis or suitable treatment option for you.



## If I am prescribed anticoagulation therapy, what effects will this have on me?

Your doctor will be able to explain how the anticoagulation is helping your condition, you should receive regular medication review appointments. Your doctor is the best person to advise you on the dosage and any other questions you may have.

## Can I take my prescribed medication when I experience an episode of SVT?

Some medications are prescribed based on taking them everyday, and some can be a PIP (Pill in the Pocket) You will need to check with your doctor to ensure you are aware on an individual basis.



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### **Is there a link between my medications and memory loss?**

There is no known link to the medications prescribed for SVT and memory loss at this time.

### **I am pregnant, is it safe to continue with my medication?**

All medications must be discussed with your doctor immediately.

### **Is there a link between SVT and thyroid issues?**

If you have any underlying health issues, such as problems with hormones or a low or overactive thyroid, you should contact your doctor to discuss suitable treatment options for you personally.

### **What medication will I be prescribed to control my palpitations if I have a thyroid condition?**

You may be prescribed beta blockers; your doctor will be able to perform the necessary investigations and appropriate treatment options for you.

### **If I am offered an ablation, do I have a choice?**

It is ultimately your decision. It will depend on if your episodes can be controlled by medication alone or whether you would benefit from having the ablation. This will vary on an individual basis; your doctor will be able to help you decide on the correct procedure for you.



### **I am over 70 years old, what are my treatment options?**

Your treatment options will be discussed between you and your doctor. Together, you will be able to decide on the correct option for you. It is not unknown that an ablation can be performed at any age as it is considered as a low-risk procedure.

### **Can a paediatric patient receive an ablation for SVT?**

It is not unknown that the ablation procedure can be performed at any age to treat SVT. This can be as young as ten years old. This is established on an individual basis and will be discussed with a paediatric electrophysiologist.

### **Is it more likely that a paediatric patient will have an ablation?**

The procedure will be based on how symptomatic the patient is, the paediatric electrophysiologist will recommend the correct form of treatment suitable.

### **If I have an underlying health condition, will this affect my chances of having an ablation?**

If you have a condition that is impacting and causing your heart to be weak, then this could cause complications and contribute

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to an unsuccessful outcome. If you have an underlying health condition, you should discuss this with your doctor in advance.

### **Will I be offered an ablation if I have heart failure?**

This will depend on an individual basis, if you have congenital heart disease then this will be assessed by your doctor. It will also depend on your general wellbeing, if you have an underlying health condition such as untreated diabetes, untreated sleep apnoea, or are severely overweight, then these can also put extra strain on your heart.

### **How long will I be expected to stay in hospital?**

The time you spend in hospital will vary on an individual basis and will be determined via your consultant. Many procedures take place during an 'outpatient' appointment and after a brief recovery period, you will be able to leave the hospital the same day. However, you may be required to stay overnight for observation. Your doctor will discuss this with you well ahead of the day.

### **When can I begin driving and working again following the procedure?**

This will vary on an individual basis. It is not advisable to drive for approximately one week, to allow the puncture wound to heal. It is advisable to avoid strenuous exercising, lifting, and allow yourself time to recover, you may feel fatigued and anxious shortly afterwards, this is all completely normal. Returning to work will depend on the type of work you do and your workplace. You should discuss this with your doctor and your employer in advance allowing you time to adjust and return at a time to suit you.

### **How can I find out if my portable ECG Monitor is approved by the regulatory body?**

It is advisable to check with your doctor beforehand, also check to see if the device will be compatible with your smartphone or tablet. You can check with the relevant FDA or NICE guidelines online to ensure it has been approved.

### **How can my portable ECG monitor help me?**

The device can be very beneficial to you by allowing you to capture and record an episode within 30 seconds. Additionally, they can detect other heart rhythm disorders such as atrial fibrillation (AF) too. It is known that this proved very beneficial particularly during the pandemic, when medical appointments were not widely available. With the support of remote monitoring, many found they could detect a problem and therefore lead to a swift diagnosis.

To view our patient resources, scan the QR code below:



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