

# **Information for patients having a Cardiac Defibrillator Threshold Test (DFT Test) (page 1 of 3)**



## **What is Defibrillator Threshold (DFT) Testing?**

DFT testing allows your cardiologist to check that your Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) is set up correctly and in the event of an abnormal fast heart rhythm that it would deliver an appropriate shock.

## **If you are taking anticoagulation medication**

If you are taking warfarin, you should have your blood clotting level (INR) checked every week. The result must be above 2 for four consecutive weeks for the procedure to go ahead safely. If your INR result is below 2 your procedure will be postponed and you will be placed back on the waiting list until your INR levels are stable.

If you are taking any other type of oral anticoagulant you must continue taking this as normal.

## **What happens in hospital?**

When you arrive at the cardiac suite, a nurse will escort you to your bed where you will be asked to change into a gown.

You will be seen by an anaesthetist before the procedure. A needle will be positioned in a vein on the back of your hand.

When all preparation is complete, you will be taken to the anaesthetic room where the anaesthetist will give you an injection which will make you fall asleep very quickly. The testing of the ICD device will take place whilst you are asleep.

## **How long does the test take?**

The procedure itself takes about 20 minutes but you should expect to be in the department for around 3 hours.

## **During the test**

Throughout the test you will be looked after by an experienced team of people including the cardiologist, anaesthetist, cardiac physiologists and nurses.

The test itself involves connecting you to an electro-cardiogram (ECG) monitoring device and an external cardiac defibrillator.

## **Cardiac Care Coordinator**

 **01722 336262 ext: 3568**

If you need your information in another language or medium (audio, large print, etc) please contact Customer Care on 0800 374 208 or send an email to: [customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:customer care@salisbury.nhs.uk)

You are entitled to a copy of any letter we write about you. Please ask if you want one when you come to the hospital.

Please complete The Friends & Family Test to tell us about your experience at: [www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily](http://www.salisbury.nhs.uk/FriendsFamily) or download our App from the Apple App store or Google Play Store.

The evidence used in the preparation of this leaflet is available on request. Please email: [patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@salisbury.nhs.uk) if you would like a reference list.

Name: Amanda Whiting  
Role: Nurse Specialist  
Date written: May 2014  
Last revised: August 2017  
Review date: August 2020  
Version: 1.1  
Code: P11194

# Information for patients having a Cardiac Defibrillator Threshold Test (DFT Test) (2 of 3)



Once you are asleep, your heart rate will be sped up artificially and your ICD will deliver its appropriate shock therapy. You will be unaware of the shock.

If the ICD fails to deliver a shock during threshold testing then you will receive an external shock via two pads that are placed on your chest prior to the procedure. Again you will be unaware of the shock.

## After the test

After the procedure you will be taken to the recovery area, where you will be monitored until you are fully recovered from the anaesthetic. Once fully awake, food and drink will be offered. If you are diabetic, please bring a sandwich.

You will be seen by the consultant cardiologist before being discharged home.

## Significant, unavoidable or frequently occurring risks

- stroke - Less than 1%
- failure to defibrillate (If the ICD does not correct the induced heart rhythm)
- musculoskeletal pain
- minor skin injury – skin burns or irritation from the electrodes (patches).
- death - between 1 in 1000 and 1 in 10,000 (very rare).

## Instructions for the day of the DFT Test

- take your usual medications before 7.30am.
- if you are taking diabetic medication we may advise you to omit or change dose. If you take insulin we will seek advice from the Diabetes Department.
- if you are diabetic, please bring a sandwich for after the procedure.
- **you must not eat for 6 hours** (including sweets and lozenges) before your procedure, but you can **drink clear fluids** (water, tea or coffee) **freely up to 2 hours before**. Tea and coffee may contain a small amount of milk only. Please drink at least one glass of water before you stop drinking.
- **do not stop taking warfarin or other anticoagulant.**
- remember to bring in to hospital all your medications.
- please bath or shower on the day of your operation.
- avoid wearing make-up.
- do not wear jewellery other than a wedding band (remove all body piercings and jewellery).
- wear glasses rather than contact lenses.
- avoid bringing children with you.
- due to limited space we ask that not more than one adult accompanies you.
- as the test is done under a light anaesthetic **it is important that you have someone to**

Cardiac Care Coordinator

 01722 336262 ext: 3568

# Information for patients having a Cardiac Defibrillator Threshold Test (DFT Test) (2 of 3)



**bring you in and take you home.**

- you will need to be with a responsible adult over night.

## **For 48 hours after the procedure**


You can return to work and normal activities straight after the test, however for the first 48 hours:

- do not drive a car or ride a bike
- do not operate any machinery
- do not drink alcohol
- do not take sleeping tablets.

If the external defibrillator has been used, your chest area may feel sore for a couple of days. Some patients say it feels like sunburn. This is quite common and can be helped by simple pain killers if required.

Further information please contact the Cardiac Care Coordinator 01722 336262 ext: 3568

Cardiac Care Coordinator

 01722 336262 ext: 3568