

# VA ECMO for postcardiotomy cardiogenic shock in adults

Information for the public

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There are uncertainties about how well this procedure works or how safe it is. So, it can only be done while more evidence is generated to check if it is safe and clinically effective. This means you will have regular appointments afterwards to check how well it is working or if it has caused problems.

## About this procedure

Postcardiotomy refers to the period immediately after open-heart surgery. Postcardiotomy cardiogenic shock is when the heart cannot pump blood well enough to meet the body's needs. It is rare and life threatening.

Venoarterial extracorporeal membrane oxygenation (VA ECMO) is when blood is taken out of the body and put through an artificial pump and lung located outside the body (extracorporeal). The ECMO machine adds oxygen to the blood (oxygenation), removes carbon dioxide and pumps the blood around the body. Tubes take the blood out of a large vein and return it into a large artery (venoarterial). This is done over days or weeks. The aim is to provide oxygenated blood to the body, while the heart, or heart and lungs, recover, or to allow time for other treatments.

## Is this procedure right for me?

You should be included in making decisions about your care, where possible. See [our webpage on shared decision making](#).

Your healthcare professionals should explain the risks and benefits of this procedure and how it is done. They should discuss your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns or those of your family or carers. They should offer you more information about the procedure.

When possible, you will be asked to decide whether you agree (consent) to have the procedure. In an emergency, healthcare professionals may give treatment immediately, without obtaining your informed consent, when it is in your best interests. Find out more about [giving consent to treatment on the NHS website](#).

## Some questions to think about

- What are the possible benefits? How likely am I to get them?
- What are the risks or side effects? How likely are they?
- What happens if it does not work or something goes wrong?
- Are other treatments available?

## Information and support

The [NHS website has information about NHS hospital services](#) and [referrals for specialist care](#).

- [NICE's information on interventional procedures guidance](#) explains what an interventional procedure is and how we assess it.
- [NICE's information on recommendations](#) explains the types of recommendation we make.

You can also get support from your local [Healthwatch](#).

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