

WOLFF-PARKINSON-WHITE (WPW) SYNDROME

WPW syndrome is an electrical abnormality of the heart caused by an extra nerve (or accessory pathway). This allows the heart to electrically short circuit itself generating rapid heart rhythms.



HOW COMMON IS IT?

WPW affects approximately 1 in 500 of the population.

WHAT SYMPTOMS MIGHT I GET?

Patients describe varying symptoms including palpitation, a fast heartbeat, shortness of breath, and giddiness.

WILL I NEED TREATMENT?

Most patients with WPW syndrome require treatment with drug therapy but the condition can be improved by a procedure called electrophysiological studies and radiofrequency ablation. Small flexible electrodes are passed into the heart to identify and remove the abnormal nerve.

WHAT EXTRA TESTS ARE REQUIRED?

You will need a heart ultrasound scan (echocardiogram) and occasionally an exercise test and heart monitor.

IS IT HEREDITARY?

No

DOES THIS AFFECT MY LIFE EXPECTANCY?

Left untreated it can do. There is an annual risk of sudden death of approximately 1 in 200.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

If you have been diagnosed with WPW syndrome then a consultation can be made by your GP with your local cardiologist for you to discuss the condition.

USEFUL LINKS

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolff-Parkinson-White_syndrome

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