

Long QT Syndrome

07

WHAT IS LONG QT SYNDROME?

LQTS is a condition that causes problems with the electrical activity of your heart. This is usually due to inheriting a faulty gene from your mother or your father. This results in the chemicals, sodium and potassium, becoming out of balance.

It takes longer for your heart to reset itself electrically after every beat and this can show up on an electrocardiogram (ECG) with a measurement called the QT interval which is longer than normal, called a long QT interval. If this occurs you can be at higher risk of having abnormal and sometimes life threatening heart rhythms that start in the bottom chambers of your heart (the ventricles).

What are the symptoms?

The main, and most important, symptom is collapsing and blacking out suddenly. Occasionally you may feel palpitations where your heart seems to have extra beats or missing beats. Some

people with LQTS may have no symptoms at all. In some people LQTS can cause a cardiac arrest. This is when your heart stops pumping blood around the body and you stop breathing normally. It is very dangerous and resuscitation would be needed.

Things to discuss in clinic:

- Any medications you should avoid that can worsen the QT interval.
- Loud noises/being startled may cause blackouts in some people.
- You can continue to be physically active, but the type of activity you do may need to be changed.
- Pregnancy and genetic counselling.
- Contraception.
- Illegal drugs can be dangerous in LQTS.
- Counselling/support groups.

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease. But so many people still need our help.

From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

What tests will I need?

Tests include ECGs, 24–48 hour ECG monitoring and exercise ECG tests, all of which are all painless and involve having sticky labels on your chest. Often genetic testing is needed which can be done on a small amount of your blood or sometimes a small amount of your spit. You may have inherited a gene that causes Long QT, but your QT interval is within normal range. This doesn't mean that you don't have the condition, it's just not been seen on any of your tests. You will need to keep going into a clinic for follow up tests to try and pick up any changes in your ECG.

All of this can be difficult to cope with, especially if you have had a sudden death in your family from Long QT syndrome. The tests you will need will depend on how high your risk is of getting an abnormal ventricular heart rhythm (from the bottom chambers of your heart). Those at most risk are people who have had a cardiac arrest or blackouts/collapses, a very long QT on the ECG, girls in puberty and young adulthood, and boys before puberty.

Treatment

Most people with LQTS will receive beta blockers to reduce their risk of blackouts or cardiac arrest. If you are at high risk, especially if you've had a cardiac arrest an ICD is probably needed. People with LQTS may also have an operation on the left side of their neck to treat the nerves that go to the heart. This is called a sympathectomy. Sometimes other drugs are used. Please see our leaflet on ICDs if you have been told you are going to have one.

Find out more about your heart and visit:

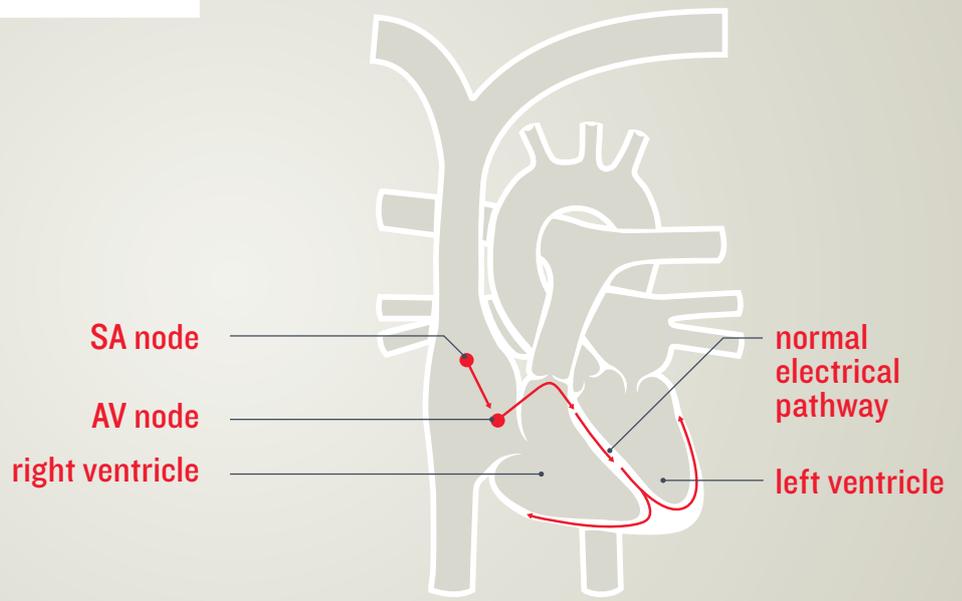
- c-r-y.org.uk
- yheart.net/meet

THINGS TO TALK ABOUT

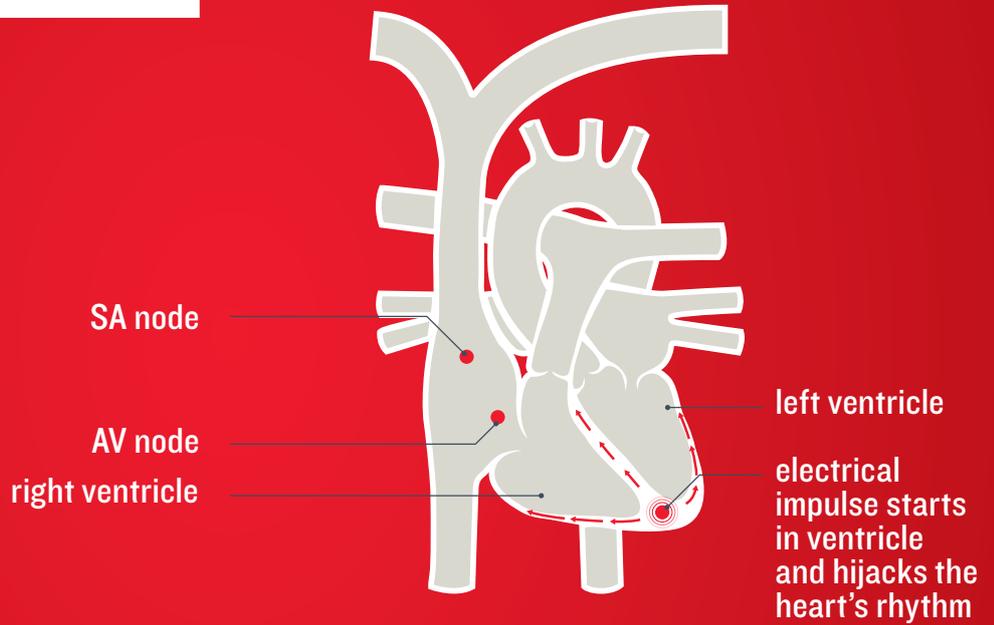
- Physical activity
- Healthy lifestyle
- Pregnancy
- Contraception
- Medicines
- Assessing risk
- Choice of treatment

Revealing the facts
about your condition

A REGULAR ELECTRICAL PATHWAY



VENTRICULAR ARRHYTHMIA



QT INTERVAL

