What is a Left Ventricular Assist Device (LVAD)?

An LVAD is a battery-operated, mechanical heart pump placed in the chest. An LVAD:
- Helps the left ventricle (the main pumping chamber of the heart) pump oxygen-rich blood to the rest of the body when the heart is too weak to do so
- Requires open-heart surgery and care afterward with support from others
- Connects through an opening in the skin

When is it used?

An LVAD may be used:
- To give your heart time to heal due to conditions affecting the heart muscle ("bridge to recovery")
- While you await a new heart ("bridge to transplant")
- If a heart transplant isn’t possible now or you prefer not to have one ("destination therapy")

Short term

Long term

What are the possible benefits and harms?

- **Benefits**
  - Improved quality of life, resume activities
  - Better breathing
  - More energy
  - Prolonged life

- **Harms or risks**
  - Major operation, risk of bleeding or infection
  - Stroke
  - Blood clots
  - Right-sided heart failure

Things to consider

- **Your goals and wishes**
- **Blood thinners**
- **Power source**
- **Need to keep dry**
- **Costs**
- **Ongoing care and changes in lifestyle**

Need help making a decision? Use our decision aid.

@ACCinTouch #CardioSmart

Information provided for educational purposes only. Please talk to your health care professional about your specific health needs. To download or order posters on other topics, visit CardioSmart.org/Posters

Central illustration source: J Am Coll Cardiol. 2022 Mar, 79 (11) 1092–1107

©2024 American College of Cardiology Foundation Z24012