A NEW dissolving stent has been used in Victoria for the first time, raising hopes that it can cut the risks, complications and repeat surgeries for thousands of heart patients.

While the St Vincent’s Hospital procedure inserted a stent into Douglas Stark’s artery in the same way 26,000 others are placed in Australian patients every year, his will have a one very important difference — it will disappear.
Traditional metal devices used to hold open clogged and damaged arteries remain a permanent fixture in a patient long after they have done their job; however, Mr Stark’s magnesium stent will dissolve in 12-18 months.

By disappearing, the Swiss-designed Magmaris device will eliminate the danger it may lead to — a narrowing or blocking of arteries, which can occur in one in 10 cases.

St Vincent’s Hospital and University of Melbourne interventional cardiologist Prof Peter Barlis said that although the risk of complications from a stent were rare, they could be deadly, and any advancement was welcome.

“It allows a bit of freedom for us into the future where, if the patient needed to have more stents or surgery, their arteries will be healthy,” Prof Barlis said.

“Normally there is no problem ... but the risks are that the stents could re-narrow, the stents could break due to the repetitive motion from every heartbeat, and also the more worrying risk of stent thrombosis, which can happen with very little warning where the
stent totally blocks off.

“The risk is very low — it’s only 0.6 per cent — but that is for every year you have the stent and the mortality of such complications is 30-40 per cent.”

After tests revealed strange electrical activity and dangerous palpitations in his heart, Mr Stark, from Fish Creek, was more than happy to be the first Victorian to test the new device — especially as it means he will undergo extensive monitoring over the next five years.

“It went brilliantly, it was absolutely wonderful, I don’t feel any pain in my chest at all,” he said. “My cardiologist is a legend.”

grant.mcarthur@news.com.au

MORE MEDICAL NEWS:

PILL THAT ‘MELTS’ LEUKAEMIA APPROVED FOR USE IN AUSTRALIA AFTER CLINICAL TRIAL

HOW DATING SITE EHARMONY CAN HELP BOOST LIVER TRANSPLANT SUCCESS

New robotic arm set to return full movement and touch