The WATCHMAN Device Implant Procedure

Information for patients with AFib and their families

Learn about:

- How a WATCHMAN device helps to prevent strokes
- Benefits a WATCHMAN procedure may offer
- The patient implant experience

Maine Medical Center
MaineHealth

centered around you

www.mmc.org
Our specially trained medical teams are eager to help patients with AFib (Atrial Fibrillation) learn about the WATCHMAN implant device procedure. This is a medical procedure that may allow you to stop using Coumadin (Warfarin) and improve your quality of life.

This booklet introduces the procedure and the patient experience. After reading the booklet, if you have further questions, please contact your heart doctor.

What’s in this booklet

The WATCHMAN device and how it works.................................2
Having the device implanted..................................................3
Do I qualify to have a WATCHMAN? ......................................4
Getting ready for your hospital stay .....................................5
Your procedure day: Getting started ....................................6
Care after your procedure .....................................................7/8
Going home ........................................................................9/10
Symptoms to report to your doctor ......................................11
Follow up visits after your procedure .................................12
Medical words used in the booklet ...............................13/14

Please note: Words printed in orange throughout the booklet are medical terms that might not be familiar. They are explained briefly in the booklet. They are also listed and explained in more depth on page 13–14.

The WATCHMAN Device and How It Works

The WATCHMAN is a small medical device which lowers the risk of stroke for adults with AFib (atrial fibrillation). This device, about the size of a quarter, is implanted in your heart without open heart surgery and helps keeps harmful blood clots from entering your blood stream. It cannot be seen outside the body and becomes a permanent part of your heart.

This is the WATCHMAN device, about the size of a quarter

How it works to prevent strokes

More than 90% of strokes in patients with AFib are caused by blood clots that start in the heart and then travel to the brain. Most clots start in a small pouch attached to the upper left chamber of the heart. In medical terms, this heart chamber is the atrium and the small pouch is the left atrial appendage. The WATCHMAN device is implanted in this pouch to block it off. This helps prevent clots from breaking off and traveling to other parts of the body.

The benefits of the WATCHMAN:

• Your risk of stroke is reduced.
• Over time, you may be able to stop taking your blood thinning medicine.
Having the WATCHMAN device implanted

- The WATCHMAN device is implanted in the hospital. The procedure takes about one hour, requires general anesthesia, and involves an overnight stay.
- See more details about what happens in the hospital on pages 7–9.

How the device is implanted

- When you are asleep, a flexible tube called a catheter is inserted into a vein in your upper leg. The WATCHMAN is inside the catheter at the tip. The doctor carefully guides the catheter through your vein and up into your heart. It enters your heart on the right side and is then crossed to the left side of your heart.
- When the catheter is in the correct place, the doctor releases the device into the small pouch called the left atrial appendage.

Do I qualify to have the WATCHMAN procedure?

Before a decision is made to move ahead with a WATCHMAN, we ask you to complete certain medical tests and meet with your WATCHMAN medical team.

Required medical tests

TEE test. This stands for Trans-Esophageal Echocardiogram. This test checks the size and shape of your left atrial appendage to make sure the device will work properly. It also allows your doctor to make sure there are no blood clots in your left atrial appendage.

Blood tests. Blood tests make sure you are healthy enough for the procedure.

Meeting with the medical team and medicine instructions

At your appointment with the doctor and nurse practitioner, they will review the procedure and answer your questions.

They will also instruct you about which medicines to take leading up to and on the day of your procedure. Keep taking your medicines unless they tell you to stop.

- If you have diabetes, be sure to let your medical team know. They may need to adjust your diabetes medicine before the procedure.
- If you are on Coumadin (Warfarin), the nurse will work with you to taper your dose, to reach an INR goal of between 2.0 and 2.5 on procedure day. If you are not on Coumadin, it will be started.
- If you are on a blood thinner medicine such as Xarelto, Eliquis, or Pradaxa, the nurse practitioner will stop this medicine and start you on Coumadin (Warfarin). This will happen about 3 weeks before your procedure date.
Getting ready for your hospital stay

As you think about the WATCHMAN procedure, you may wonder what will happen while you’re in the hospital and afterwards. The next few pages give you this information.

What to bring to the hospital and what to leave at home

Please do bring:

- A list of all the medicines you take, how much you take of each one, and how often you take them. Include all vitamins, herbs, and over the counter medicines.
- Your CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) machine if you use one at home.
- Your eyeglasses, hearing aids, or other assistive devices you usually use.
- Personal items as desired such as hairbrush, toothbrush, or electric razor.

Please do NOT bring:

- Your own medicines. We will give you the medicines you need while you’re at the hospital.
- Jewelry or other valuables.

Food and drink the night before your procedure

- Do enjoy a regular dinner the night before your procedure.
- Do NOT eat or drink anything after midnight. This includes water, mints, or gum. Do not eat breakfast. Do not drink juice, coffee, or tea.
- If your doctor or nurse practitioner has told you to take medicines, take them with just a sip of water.

Your procedure day: Getting started

Hospital admission

Your WATCHMAN procedure will be done at Maine Medical Center, 22 Bramhall Street, Portland, Maine.

- Please come to the Admitting Department at the time given to you by your WATCHMAN team. A family member or friend is welcome to come with you.
- Admitting staff will ask you a few questions. Then you will be taken to the nursing unit where you get ready for the procedure. A family member or friend may continue to stay with you.

Getting ready: Next steps

Step 1: On the nursing unit

- A lab tech (technician) will draw your blood.
- A nurse will review your health history and medicines. Please be sure to include vitamins, herbal supplements, and over the counter medicines.
- A nurse will start an IV (Intravenous line) to give you antibiotics. This reduces the risk of infection.

Step 2: At the cardiac cath lab (cardiac catheterization laboratory)

- When it’s time, you will be taken to the cardiac cath lab to finish getting ready. Here you will talk with the anesthesia specialist. They will answer any questions and ask you to sign a consent form.
- Your family or friend will be given a pager which will light up when your procedure is over. This signals them to return to the 8th floor of the Richards wing to meet with the doctor and hear how the procedure went. They can wait in your room, the cafeteria, or the coffee shop on the ground floor.
Care after your procedure

- Once the procedure is done and you have recovered from anesthesia, the doctor will talk with you and your family or friend about how it went. Then you will be brought to your room on the 9th floor.

- You will be attached to monitors that help the nurses measure your heart rate, heart rhythm, blood pressure, and oxygen level.

Help us manage your pain

- Your doctor will order pain medicine for you and we want to make sure it works well. This will help you feel better and get better faster.

- The nurses will ask you to rate your pain on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being very little pain and 10 being major pain.

- Please tell your nurse if you are in pain or if the medicine is not working, so we can help right away.

Rest for 4 hours and then gentle movement

- You must stay in bed with your legs still for 4 hours after the procedure. This prevents bleeding from your upper leg where the doctor inserted the catheter used to access your heart.

- After 4 hours, your nurse will help you out of bed and into a chair. When you feel ready, the nurse will help you walk in your room or in the hall.

Drink and eat as your body is ready

- Your IV (intravenous line) will give you fluids and your nurse will also give you sips of water.

- When you can tolerate the water and feel ready to try eating, you may do so.

Care after your procedure continued

When can I go home?

Most patients are discharged from the hospital the day after their procedure. Remember, you will need someone to drive you home. They should come to the hospital by 10 a.m. the day after your procedure.

Taking medicines after the procedure

After your WATCHMAN device is implanted, your team will instruct you about all the medicines you need to take and for how long.

**Coumadin.** After the procedure, you must continue to use Coumadin (Warfarin) for 45–60 days. At this time, you will have a repeat TEE to check on your WATCHMAN device. If it looks good, your Coumadin will be stopped and another medication called Plavix will be started. While you are on Coumadin, you must have frequent blood tests to make sure your blood is thinned to the right level. You may hear the doctors and nurses talk about your INR, which measures this level. Your INR should be between 2.0 and 3.0.

**Aspirin.** Continue taking your Aspirin as prescribed.

**Plavix.** When your WATCHMAN team stops your Coumadin, for a period of time you will take another blood thinner called Plavix (Clopidogrel).

**Antibiotics.** If you have a dental procedure in the 6 months after your WATCHMAN implant, tell your dentist. Let them know you need antibiotics before the procedure. Your doctor may ask you to continue with antibiotics for dental procedures after this time.
Going home

Leaving the hospital

- **Your driver.** For your safety, someone else must drive you home. Please make sure your driver arrives at the hospital by 10 a.m. on the day you plan to leave.

- **Stretch.** If you have a long ride, get out of the car, stand up, and stretch your legs for a minute every hour.

- **Rest at home.** You will likely find yourself tired when you get home. Plan to rest.

When can I shower or bathe?

You may remove the Band-Aid over the puncture sites. You may notice a small bruise around these sites. This is normal.

- **Do shower.** You may do so as soon as you get home. Keep water temperature mild, not extremely hot or extremely cold. Gently pat the puncture sites to dry them after your shower.

  - **Do NOT take baths for 5 days.** This includes no Jacuzzi baths or hot tubs.

  - **Do NOT swim** for 7 days after your procedure.

When can I return to normal activities?

You can likely return to your normal activities, including driving, within 48 hours after the procedure.

For 2 weeks after the procedure:

- Do not exercise.

For the 1st month after the procedure:

- Do not lift more than 20 pounds.
Follow up visits after your procedure

Follow up visits are important

We will schedule follow up visits after your procedure with your WATCHMAN doctor or nurse practitioner. These are critical to the success of your implanted device.

If you need to confirm or change an appointment, call:

Maine Medical Partners – MaineHealth Cardiology: 207-885-9905

Symptoms to report

You will have a follow up visit within 1 or 2 weeks after your procedure. However, pay attention to the symptoms below. They are warning signs to call your WATCHMAN doctor right away.

Symptoms to report

- A temperature of more than 101 degrees Fahrenheit. This is 38.4 degrees Celsius. This could be a sign of infection.
- Redness, swelling, or drainage at the procedure site.
- Trouble or pain with swallowing or vomiting.
- New cough, or coughing up blood.
- Feeling like your heart is racing.
- Any trouble getting or taking your prescribed medicines.

Number to call to report symptoms

Call (207) 885-9905

Follow up visits after the procedure

Visit 1: 1–2 weeks

Visit 2: 45 days. At this visit, you will have a TEE to check on your device.

Visit 3: 60 days. At this visit your doctor will review your medications and may make changes based on your TEE results.

Visit 4: 6 months

Visit 5: 1 year

Visit 6: 2 years
The words listed here are words highlighted in orange print in the booklet. They are medical terms you might hear used by your doctors and nurses.

**AFib.** Short for Atrial Fibrillation — an irregular or abnormal heart beat

**Atrium.** The upper chamber on each side of your heart. Each chamber is an atrium. Both of them together are called atria.

**Catheter.** In medicine, a catheter is a thin tube made from medical grade materials. Catheters are medical devices that can be inserted in the body to treat diseases or perform a procedure.

**Coumadin.** The generic name is Warfarin. Coumadin is a prescription medicine used to treat blood clots and to lower the chance of blood clots forming in your body.

**INR/Protime.** INR stands for International Normalized Ratio. Protime is short for Prothrombin Time. These are both used to measure how well Coumadin (Warfarin) is working to prevent clots, but not cause too much bleeding. Measuring your INR helps your WATCHMAN team knows how to adjust your medicines as needed.

**Left atrial appendage.** This is a small pouch attached to your left atrium where most blood clots start in patients with AFib. It is this pouch that is permanently blocked by the WATCHMAN device.

**Plavix.** The generic name is Clopidogrel. This is a medicine that helps prevents blood clots from forming.

**TEE.** TEE stands for Trans-Esophageal Echocardiogram. This procedure uses sound waves to take pictures of your heart through your esophagus (the tube leading from throat to stomach). In a TEE test, you are given medicine to relax you. Then a flexible tube is guided into your esophagus where pictures of your heart are taken. These pictures are the clearest way for your doctor to see your atria. After a WATCHMAN implant, it’s the best way for the team to confirm that the device is in the right position.
Notes and questions for my WATCHMAN team

For more information, contact:
Maine Medical Partners — MaineHealth Cardiology
(207) 885-9905

www.mmc.org/arrhythmias