

Atrial Fibrillation (A-Fib) After Ablation Care

You had an atrial fibrillation (A-Fib) ablation to try to correct a problem with your heartbeat. This *Health Facts for You* will review what to expect and how to care for yourself at home.

What to Expect

After your procedure, you may have:

- Soreness or tenderness at the puncture sites that may last 1 week.
- Bruising at the site that may take 2-3 weeks to go away.
- A small lump (dime to quarter size) at the site which may last up to 6 weeks.
- Periods of A-Fib or a fluttering feeling in your chest over the next 3-6 months. This should improve with time, as the swelling and irritation improves.

Pain Control

- You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) 325mg tablets every 4-6 hours
- You may place an ice pack or warm pack over the site for 20 minutes every 2 hours. Gently wipe the puncture site after you remove the pack if it is wet.

Care of the Puncture Site(s)

You may remove the dressing over your groin and shower after 24 hours. Remove the dressing, over the site before taking a shower. To care for the puncture site:

- Gently clean the site for 3 days with soap and water, pat dry, and leave open to air.
- Keep the site dry.
- Inspect the site daily for redness, swelling, or drainage.

Activity

- Avoid strenuous activity and **do not** lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 7 days.
- Do not sit in a bathtub, hot tub or go into a swimming pool for 7 days.
- After 7 days, you may resume normal activity.

Going Home

- Have someone drive you home.
- Do not drive for 24 hours.
- Do not make any important decisions until the next day.

Heart Healthy Diet

Include heart healthy foods in your diet, such as: vegetables, fruits, nuts, beans, lean meat, fish, and whole grains. **Limit sodium, alcohol, and sugar.**

Lifestyle Changes

- Do not smoke
- Be active. Try for at least 30 minutes of activity on most days of the week. Talk to your doctor about what type of level of exercise is safe for you.
- Maintain a healthy weight. Lose weight if you need to.
- Manage health problems such as high blood pressure, sleep apnea, high cholesterol, and diabetes.

Medicines

Take your blood thinner for the next 3 months. Do not skip any doses. Many patients will need to keep taking their blood thinner after ablation.

If you take Coumadin (warfarin), you will need to have a PT/INR level checked (and may need dose adjusted) within 3-5 days of discharge.

Follow-up Visits

- You will have an ECG in 1 month.
- You will also have a clinic visit with your advanced practice clinician or heart rhythm doctor in 3 months and 12 months.
- You may also wear a heart monitor to look at your heart rhythm at 6 months.

Return to Work

Talk to your clinician about when it is safe to return to work.

When to Call

Call your doctor if you have:

- Chest pain or new back pain
- Increased shortness of breath
- Signs of infection around the puncture site, such as:
 - Redness
 - Warmth
 - Swelling
 - Drainage
- A fever over 101.5°F
- Trouble urinating
- A sudden increase in weight overnight (more than 3 pounds), or over a few days, this could be a sign of fluid retention
- A-Fib that lasts longer than 24 hours or if you do not feel well
- Questions or concerns about stopping your blood thinner

Who to Call

UW Health Heart and Vascular Clinic
Monday-Friday, 7:30 am - 5:00 pm
608-263-1530

After hours, weekends and holidays, the paging operator will answer this number. Ask for “Cardiology Fellow On-Call”. Give your name and phone number with area code. The doctor will call you back. The toll-free number is **1-800-323-8942**.

When to Get Emergency Help

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency room if you have:

- Trouble swallowing, or you are coughing up or vomiting blood.
- Severe swelling, new numbness, weakness or coldness in your extremities (arms, hands, fingers, legs, feet, toes), or they turn blue.
- Sudden bleeding or swelling at the groin puncture site. If this occurs, apply direct pressure. If the bleeding does not stop after 10 minutes of placing constant pressure on the site, call 911. Keep pressure on the site until help arrives.
- Signs of stroke:
 - Sudden face drooping, arm or leg numbness /weakness, confusion
 - Trouble seeing, trouble speaking, trouble walking, or severe headache

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 1/2023 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#8276.