Microwave Maze Procedure

This handout explains the microwave maze procedure. Some patients have the maze procedure to help stop atrial fibrillation (A-Fib), an abnormal heart rhythm. Your care team will decide if this surgery is right for you.

Treatment

This procedure may help patients who:

- Do not have a clot in one of the heart chambers.
- Take medicine that does not help or fix their A-Fib.
- Have allergies or side effects to certain medicines.
- Cannot take blood thinners.

You may have the procedure in 1 of 2 ways:

- **A planned open-heart surgery.** The doctor makes a cut along the sternum (breastbone).
- **A stand-alone surgery.** The doctor makes two small cuts on the side of the chest, below the arm pit.

During the maze procedure, the doctor uses a catheter to burn small paths in heart tissue. As the tissue heals, scars form. These scars block faulty signals that cause A-Fib.

Surgery time varies. Stand-alone surgery often takes 2 to 4 hours. Open-heart surgery time depends on your care plan. Many patients still have A-Fib after surgery. The heart often returns to a normal rhythm within 6 months.

After Surgery

- You will go to the cardiac surgery unit.
- You will have chest tubes on both sides of your chest to help keep your lungs inflated. You will be given oxygen.
- You will have IV lines, a blood pressure cuff, and heart monitor.

Medicine

Your doctor will prescribe medicine to control your heart rhythm. You may also take medicines to thin your blood. Your doctor will tell you how long to take these medicines.

Wound Care

You will have a bandage on your chest wounds for 1 to 2 days. Then the wounds will be open to air. Your nurse will teach you how to care for them.

Driving

- **Do not** drive for 2 weeks after stand-alone surgery.
- **Do not** drive for 6 weeks after open-heart surgery.
- **Do not** drive while taking narcotic pain medicine.

Activity

- **Do not** lift heavy objects for 3 weeks after stand-alone surgery.
- **Do not** lift heavy objects for 4 to 6 weeks after open-heart surgery.
- Stay active to build strength and prevent problems. Walking and gentle arm exercises work well.

Follow-Up Care

You will follow up with your cardiologist and cardiac surgeon.

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 © 3/2026 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6510