

Self-care After Radiofrequency Ablation

When you go home

This handout explains self-care after having radiofrequency ablation. This procedure cauterizes (burns) small areas of the heart to help correct heart arrhythmias.

Your doctor today was: _____

Same-day Discharge

Before you leave the hospital, a doctor or nurse practitioner will:

- Examine your insertion site.
- Talk with you about the results of your procedure.

For the next 24 hours:

- Rest quietly at home.
- Do **not** drive.



*You **must** have a responsible adult drive you home after your procedure.*

For Your Safety

The medicines you had for this procedure can make you sleepy, and make it hard for you to think clearly. Because of this:

- **Plan to have a responsible adult to take you home after your procedure.** You may not take a bus, shuttle, taxi, or any other transportation by yourself.
- For the next **24 hours**:
 - Do **NOT** drive. Make sure you have a responsible adult who can help you if needed during this time.
 - Do **NOT** be responsible for children, pets, or an adult who needs care.
 - Do **NOT** drink alcohol, or take drugs other than the ones your doctors prescribed or suggested.
 - Do **NOT** make important decisions or sign legal papers.

Next-Day Discharge

If you spent the night in the hospital after your procedure, your doctor will come to your room and check on your insertion site before you leave the hospital. They will also talk with you about your results.

Activity

- Starting **24 hours** after you are discharged, you may:
 - Return to light activity.
 - Drive.
 - Shower, but leave the dressings on while showering. After you shower for the first time, you may take the dressings off. You do not need to put another dressing on.
- For **48 hours** after your procedure:
 - Do **not** do anything that puts stress on your puncture site. This includes housework, gardening, and many self-care tasks. Ask for help with any tasks that need to be done during this time.
 - You may go up and down stairs, but limit how much you do this.
- For **7 days** after your procedure:
 - Do **not** lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds (4.54 kilograms). This includes pets, groceries, children, trash, and laundry. (A gallon of water weighs almost 9 pounds.)
 - Do **not** hold your breath, bear down, or strain when sitting on the toilet.
 - Do **not** allow the puncture site to be covered by water. This means do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming. You may shower starting 24 hours after your procedure.
 - Avoid sexual activity.
 - Do **not** go hiking, bicycling, jogging, or running.
- **Slowly** increase your activity level over the next week. Start at about half your activity level before your ablation. Slowly build up from there.

Pain Control

- The puncture site where the catheter was inserted will most likely be sore for 1 to 2 days. You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) to ease pain. Follow the instructions on the package.

- If your doctor prescribed aspirin for your heart, you may take it as usual. But do **not** take extra aspirin for pain control.
- For **5 days** after your procedure, do **not** take ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin), naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn), or other anti-inflammatories. They may cause increased bleeding.
- If your pain at the puncture site is not eased by acetaminophen, and it is a weekday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., call the EP nurse. After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Cardiology E Fellow on call.

Site Care

- Keep the catheter sites clean and dry.
- You may remove the dressing 24 hours after your procedure.
- After you remove the dressing, gently clean the site with mild soap and water. Do not scrub or rub the area. Lightly pat dry with a clean towel.
- You may have a bruise where the catheter was inserted. It may spread down your leg. It may take 2 to 6 weeks for the bruise to go away.
- For the next 3 days, check for these signs of infection:
 - Redness, swelling, or drainage at the site
 - Fever higher than 100.4°F (38.0°C)
- If you have swelling or bleeding at the puncture site:
 - Use clean fingers or fist to put pressure on the area to stop the bleeding.

If the swelling or bleeding does not stop after 10 minutes, keep pressure on the site. If it is a weekday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., call the EP nurse. After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Cardiology E Fellow on call.

Medicines

- If you stopped taking any blood-thinning medicines such as warfarin (Coumadin), clopidogrel (Plavix), dabigatran (Pradaxa), rivaroxaban (Xarelto), apixaban (Eliquis), or edoxaban (Savaysa), you may start taking it again the night of your procedure, unless your doctor who prescribed it tells you otherwise.
- Take your other medicines as usual after your procedure.

When to Call for Help

Problems are rare, but please tell us right away if you have any of these symptoms, so that we can follow up as needed.

If you have sudden, heavy bleeding or a lot of swelling, put pressure on the site and call 911.

Over the **next 7 days**, call your EP nurse during clinic hours (weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.) if you have:

- Fever above 100.4°F (38.0°C)
- Chest pain
- Feelings of being dizzy or lightheaded
- Any signs of infection at the puncture site or the IV site:
 - Bleeding
 - Swelling, redness, or increased tenderness
- Nervous system changes:
 - Problems thinking
 - Slurred speech
 - Numbness or tingling in your face, arms, or legs
- Shortness of breath that is new and different

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- **For general questions** weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call your EP nurse at 206.598.7146.
- **If you cannot reach your EP nurse** weekdays from 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.: Call Cardiac Procedures at 206.598.7146. Ask to talk with a nurse.
- **For urgent concerns related to your procedure**, or if it is after hours or on a weekend or holiday: Call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Cardiology E Fellow on call.

Urgent Concerns

If you have any of the symptoms listed below, call the EP Nurse during clinic hours (weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.). After office hours, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Cardiology E Fellow on call.

- **Swelling or blood oozing** where the catheter was inserted, that does not stop after you apply pressure for 10 minutes
- **Drainage** or a lot of **redness** at the site
- **Severe pain** that is not eased by acetaminophen (Tylenol)

Follow-up Care

- Keep taking your prescribed medicines, unless your doctor tells you otherwise.
- If you have questions or concerns about your procedure during clinic hours (weekdays, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.), call the EP nurse or Cardiac Procedures at 206.598.7146.
- Follow up with your primary care provider as instructed.