

At Home After Your Transcatheter Left Atrial Appendage Closure (LAAC)

Self-care and what to expect

This handout explains what to expect after a transcatheter left atrial appendage closure (LAAC) procedure using a Watchman implant. It includes self-care tips and numbers to call for questions and concerns.

Your Care After Your Procedure

The Heart Team at UW Medical Center (UWMC) will manage your care for the first 45 days after your procedure.

After you go home, we will monitor you closely to make sure your recovery is going well. We want to make sure you do not need to be readmitted to the hospital.

In the First Few Days After You Leave the Hospital

- A nurse will call you to ask about your symptoms, medicines, and overall well-being.
- If you feel that you need to see a provider before your scheduled follow-up visits, please call us. We can help set up a visit with one of our providers.



A nurse will call to see how you are doing in the first few days after you leave the hospital.

45 Days After Your Procedure

You will have a follow-up visit at UWMC with the cardiologist or nurse practitioner. At this visit, you will have a *transesophageal echocardiogram* (TEE). You will have either sedation or anesthesia for this procedure. The TEE will:

- Confirm that the Watchman implant has sealed your LAA
- Tell us if we can stop your *anticoagulation* (blood-thinning) medicines

If needed, a TEE may be repeated between your 45-day and 1-year follow-up visits.

1 Year After Your Procedure

At 1 year, you will have a follow-up visit and a *transthoracic echocardiogram* (TTE) at UWMC. If you are part of a research study, you may have follow-up visits more often.

When to Call

Most people do **not** have new or increased symptoms at home after this procedure. If you have any questions or concerns:

- Weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., call **206.598.VALV (8258)** and ask to talk with a nurse or nurse practitioner.
- After hours and on weekends and holidays, call **206.598.6190** and ask to page the Interventional Cardiologist on call.

Urgent Care

Call the nurse or nurse practitioner **right away** if you have any of these signs of infection:

- Redness, warmth, or heat around the incision
- New drainage
- Fever of 101°F (38.5°C) or higher

Incision Care

You will have a small puncture wound in your groin area. You may also have bruising. You should not have any drainage, bleeding, or pain.

A few patients have a small *suture* (stitch) in their groin area at the puncture site. This suture is usually removed before leaving the hospital. If you still have a suture when you get home, please call our office for us to remove it.

While your incision is healing:

- It is best to leave the area open to the air.
- If your clothing rubs or irritates your incision, you can cover the area with dry gauze. Remove the gauze at night.
- Do **not** apply lotions, creams, or powders to the area until the site has healed.

Showering and Bathing

- You may shower when you get home, unless your doctor tells you not to. When you shower:
 - Gently wash your puncture site with mild, unscented soap and warm water.
 - Gently pat your puncture site dry (do not rub it).
- Do **not** take very hot showers. Hot water may lower your blood pressure and make you weak or dizzy. This could cause you to faint. Fainting may also occur from the medicines you are taking.
- To avoid infection in your puncture site, do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming for 1 week after your procedure.

Activities

After you get home, you can expect to return to your usual lifestyle. But, **for 1 week** after your procedure:

- Do **not** lift, push, or pull anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. This includes carrying children, pets, groceries, laundry, or trash. (A gallon of water weighs almost 9 pounds.)
- Do **not** mow the lawn, rake, or do other yard or garden work.
- Do **not** push hard or strain when having a bowel movement,

Driving

Most patients who were driving before LAAC can start driving again **48 hours after discharge**.

Dental Work After LAAC

Avoid dental visits for 3 to 6 months after your procedure. If your teeth need care during this time, tell your dentist that you have had a heart procedure and will need antibiotics before your visit. You will need antibiotics before any dental work, even a dental exam or routine cleaning. This is done to protect your heart from infection.

Follow this precaution for 6 months after your procedure. If your dental office has any questions, ask them contact us.

Questions?

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

Weekdays from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.:
Call the Heart Institute at
206.598.VALV (206.598.8258).

After hours or on holidays or weekends: Call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Structural Heart Clinic nurse, nurse practitioner, or the Interventional Cardiologist on call.