

Guide: 10 Things to Expect After AFib Ablation

Cardiac ablation is one of the most common treatments for patients living with atrial fibrillation (AFib). Find out more about what you may experience during the recovery period.

1. Your arrhythmia may persist.

Following an ablation, your heart needs an adjustment period to get used to the new rhythm that comes with an ablation. If you are still experiencing your arrhythmia for a few weeks after the ablation, or if it changes speed or duration, there's no need to panic or assume the procedure didn't work.

2. Every body recovers from the procedure differently.

Perhaps you know someone who underwent the ablation procedure, and they were back to their normal routine within a couple of days. Or maybe a loved one took several weeks to recover fully. The ablation procedure affects everyone differently, so understand that your recovery schedule may not match with your expectations.

3. Anesthesia affects people in different ways.

The after-effects of general anesthesia can range from very mild to significant discomfort. A sore throat and coughing are common effects of the anesthesia, and

your grogginess may persist anywhere from a couple of hours to several days following the procedure.

4. Mild to moderate chest pain is common in the days after.

Cardiac ablation is a common and safe procedure, but that doesn't mean it isn't hard on your body. Since the purpose of ablation is to deliberately damage some of the tissue surrounding the heart, it's natural to expect some chest pain to linger for a few days afterward. If you do experience chest pain, it should subside as your recovery time passes.

5. Pain from the catheter insertion is also normal.

In a cardiac ablation, the catheter is inserted through the groin area to reach the chest cavity. This usually results in some pain, discomfort, and mild bruising in the area for a few days after the ablation.

6. Some patients experience digestive issues during recovery.

The ablation procedure can also cause some digestive irregularities. Acid reflux is a common issue, and it can usually be resolved by taking an over-the-counter acid-blocking medication. You may also find that you are unable to eat large portions of food at one time, and you may also experience some bloating. It's often a good idea to eat several smaller meals throughout the day, so that you give your digestive system extra time to process food.

7. You will need to alter your exercise routine.

Even after you feel well enough to begin resuming your daily activities, you will probably need to take it easier when exercising. It's normal to find that you get tired after a less intense or shorter exercise session than before the procedure, even for months after it is completed. The heart plays a significant role during physical activity, so it's important to allow time for it to recalibrate before you return to your pre-procedure exercise routine.

8. Your body may retain excess water for a few weeks.

The saline solution injected into your body as a result of the ablation can cause you to retain water. Drink plenty of water to flush it out of your system and stay hydrated during recovery.

9. You may experience changes in your resting heart rate.

It's most common for the resting heart rate of post-ablation patients to increase by approximately 10 to 20 beats per minute. This usually lasts for a few months, and is followed by the heart settling into a slower rhythm.

10. AFib medication may still be required.

Having an ablation doesn't mean you'll be able to cease taking all medication immediately. It's still important to minimize the risk of a stroke following the procedure, so medication to regulate your heart rhythm and prevent blood clots may still be necessary.

Call our office today to speak with a care coordinator: (941) 484-6758