

Is WATCHMAN® Right for You?

If you're an AFib patient, you may have heard about the WATCHMAN® device that helps lower the risk of stroke. In this guide, we explain what WATCHMAN is, who is a candidate, and the benefits it provides over traditional anticoagulation medication.

Who is a good fit for the WATCHMAN procedure?

In general, WATCHMAN is recommended for patients who meet the following criteria:

- Heart valve problems are not the source of their atrial fibrillation
- They have been recommended anticoagulant medication as an AFib treatment
- Their increased risk of bleeding indicates that they should use an alternative to blood thinners, even if they can take Warfarin

The WATCHMAN device is designed to help patients who are suffering from non-valvular atrial fibrillation reduce their risk of stroke. It is currently the only FDA-approved implant that has been shown to safely lower the stroke risk for AFib patients, and it is suitable for a significant portion of people who would otherwise have to rely on pharmacological treatments in order to protect against the possibility of a stroke. Since every patient reacts differently to anticoagulation drug therapies such as warfarin, AFib patients

should consult with their doctor to determine whether or not the WATCHMAN device may be a safer, more effective option.

Who is not a good fit for the WATCHMAN procedure?

WATCHMAN is an innovative procedure that has already helped tens of thousands of AFib patients, but not every AFib patient is a good candidate for the device. The following conditions may disqualify an AFib patient from receiving the WATCHMAN implant:

- The patient is ineligible for warfarin therapy or an aspirin regimen
- The patient is allergic to any of the materials used in the WATCHMAN device, including nitinol (nickel and titanium alloy)
- The WATCHMAN implant cannot fit into the patient's left atrial appendage because the opening is too large or too small
- The patient is ineligible to undergo procedures that involve heart catheterization

How is the WATCHMAN procedure performed?

In most cases, the WATCHMAN procedure takes approximately one hour to complete, and the patient is usually under general anesthesia. An incision is made in the leg and a catheter is inserted, placing the device in left atrial appendage.

Once the WATCHMAN device is in place, the mesh covering expands in order to close the left atrial appendage. Because this area is responsible for the

vast majority of stroke-causing blood clots in AFib patients, closing the opening will significantly decrease the patient's stroke risk.

When is the WATCHMAN procedure a better alternative to medication?

Anticoagulant drug therapies have been the most common treatment methods for AFib patients for many years. Their effectiveness can vary greatly depending upon the patient. They also cause some side effects that people would rather not live with for extended periods of time.

The WATCHMAN device, however, is designed to help AFib patients transition off of long-term anticoagulation drugs. Keep in mind that many patients will need to continue using the drugs in the immediate aftermath of the WATCHMAN procedure as doctors assess the performance of the device. However, a clinical study found that 99% of patients who received the WATCHMAN implant were able to end the use of warfarin within one year, and 92% were able to stop using the drug after just 45 days.

Additional advantages the WATCHMAN procedure has over traditional drug treatments include:

- The WATCHMAN procedure is a one-time event, compared to a lifetime of taking medication to protect against the dangers of stroke
- The WATCHMAN device is free of the side-effects associated with anticoagulation drugs



- There is a long-term lower risk of bleeding with WATCHMAN than continued warfarin use

If you or a loved one are living with a heart rhythm disorder such as atrial fibrillation, contact Heart Rhythm Consultants. Our doctors are board certified in Cardiology & Cardiac Electrophysiology and have been serving patients in Sarasota and surrounding cities including Port Charlotte, Venice, Tampa and Sun City Center for over a decade.

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