

# Watchman procedure preparation

Section 1 of 6: What is a Watchman implant?

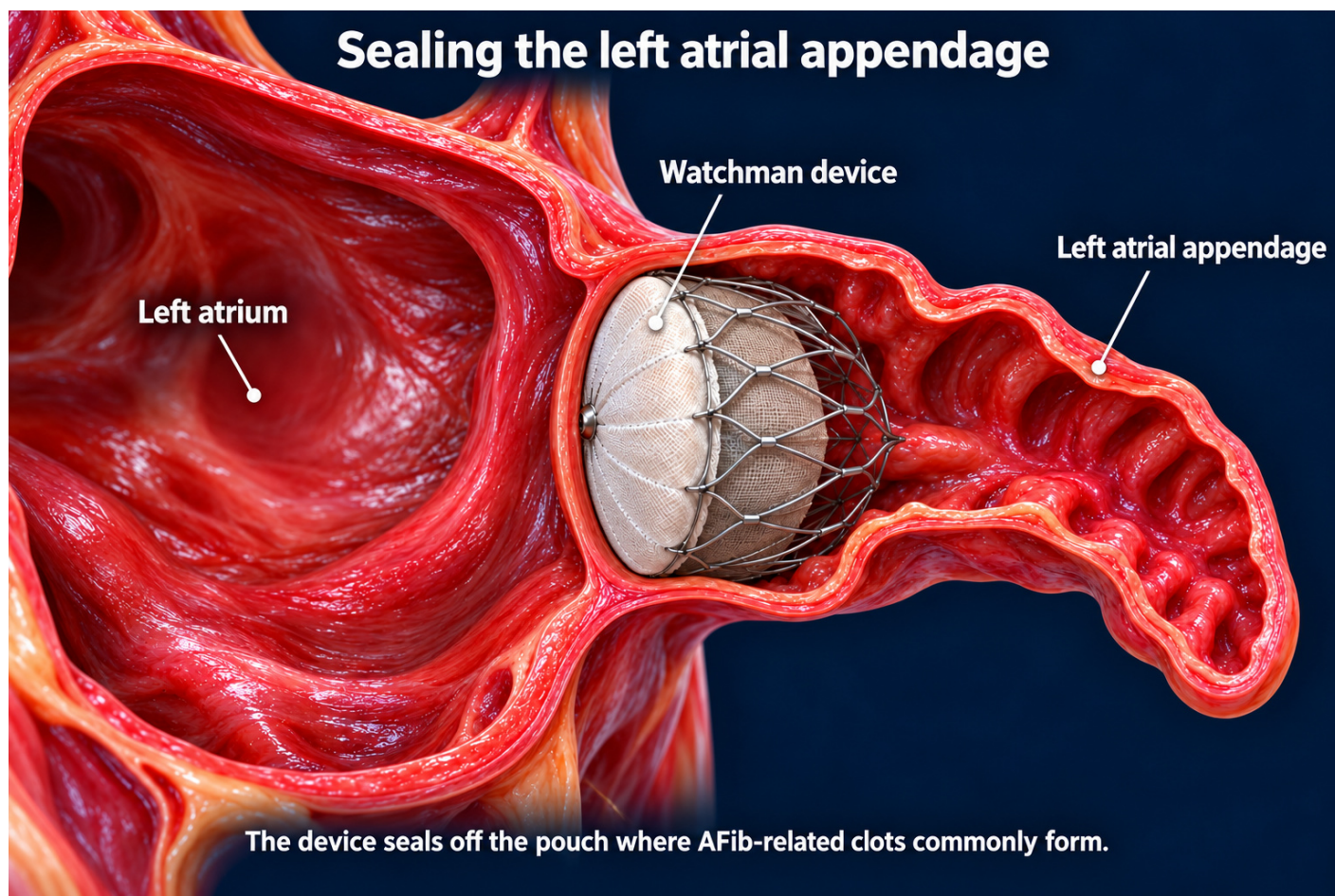
What to expect before, during, and after your Watchman implant.

## SECTION 1

### What is a Watchman implant?

The Watchman is a small device placed inside the left atrial appendage (LAA) - a pouch attached to the heart's upper left chamber. In patients with atrial fibrillation, blood can pool in this pouch and form clots. These clots can travel to the brain and cause a stroke.

The implant seals off this pouch to reduce stroke risk in selected patients. It does not treat atrial fibrillation or restore a normal heart rhythm.



The Watchman seals the opening of the LAA, helping prevent clots from this pouch from entering the bloodstream and traveling to the brain. It reduces stroke risk; it does not eliminate all clot formation or all causes of stroke.

You will still need prescribed blood thinner or antiplatelet medicines while the implant heals. Follow-up imaging checks its position and seal before your doctor decides whether medicines can be changed.

# Watchman procedure preparation

Section 2 of 6: Preparing for your procedure

What to expect before, during, and after your Watchman implant.

## SECTION 2

# Preparing for your Watchman procedure

Your procedure team will give you instructions for your arrival time, fasting, and medicines. Review these ahead of time so you know what to expect.

## Before procedure day

- Confirm the location and arrival time.
- Complete any requested blood tests or heart imaging.
- Bring an updated medication list, including supplements, and a list of allergies.
- Arrange for someone to drive you home and stay with you after discharge. Do not drive for 48 hours after the procedure.

## Eating and drinking

Follow your team's instructions about when to stop eating and drinking. These instructions help keep you safe during anesthesia.

## Your medicines

Confirm which medicines to take, hold, and restart - including blood thinners, aspirin, clopidogrel, and diabetes medicines. Do not stop these medicines on your own.

## **Your anesthesia plan**

Your doctor will explain whether you will receive general anesthesia or sedation and how imaging will guide the implant.

## **What to bring**

Bring your identification, insurance information, medication list, and comfortable clothing. Tell your team before the procedure if you develop a fever, new illness, or a significant change in your health.

# Watchman procedure preparation

Section 3 of 6: Procedure day

What to expect before, during, and after your Watchman implant.

## SECTION 3

# What happens on procedure day?

## Checking in

Your team reviews your medicines, allergies, and health history. A nurse places an IV, and monitors track your heart rhythm, blood pressure, and oxygen level.

## Keeping you comfortable

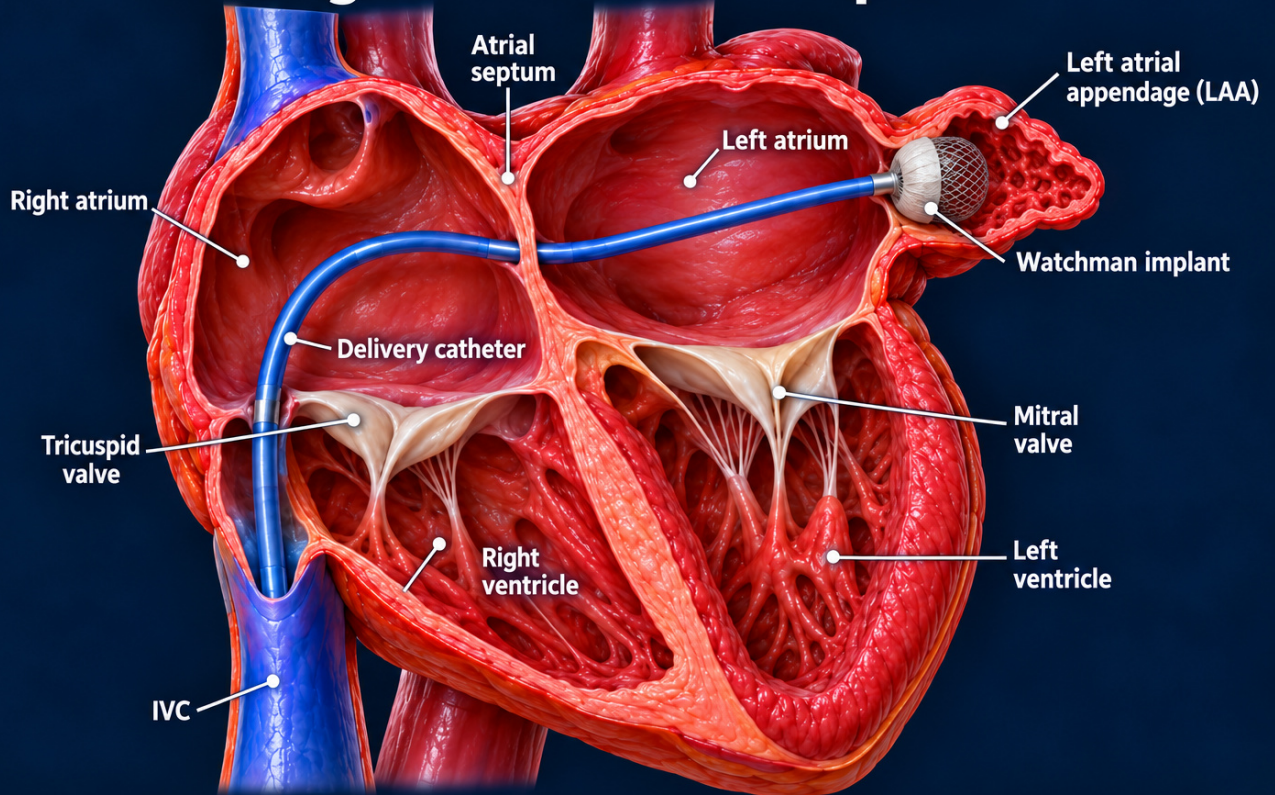
Your doctor will tell you whether the procedure will use general anesthesia or sedation. Your team monitors you throughout the procedure.

## Placing the Watchman

Your doctor guides a catheter through a vein in the groin, into the heart, and across the wall between the upper chambers to reach the left atrial appendage.

Heart imaging guides placement. The Watchman expands inside the appendage, and your doctor checks its position, stability, and seal before releasing it. The implant stays in your heart, and the catheter is removed.

# Placing the Watchman implant



The catheter enters through the IVC, crosses the atrial septum, and delivers the implant into the LAA.

The catheter travels through the IVC into the right atrium, crosses the atrial septum, and delivers the Watchman at the opening of the LAA. The catheter is removed after the implant is released. Conceptual illustration.

## Closing the groin access site

Your doctor uses a vascular closure device to close the access site. Your nurses check the area for bleeding or swelling.

## Recovery

You rest while your team monitors your heart rhythm, vital signs, and groin site. Your nurse tells you when you can sit up, walk, eat, and drink.

Many patients go home the same day; others stay overnight. Before discharge, your team reviews your medicines, groin care, activity restrictions, and follow-up plan.

# Watchman procedure preparation

Section 4 of 6: Groin care and recovery

What to expect before, during, and after your Watchman implant.

## SECTION 4

### Groin care and recovery at home

Your groin access site is closed with a vascular closure device. Even though the opening is small, the vein and surrounding tissues need time to heal.

#### Driving after your Watchman implant

Do not drive for 48 hours after your procedure. You may resume driving after 48 hours if you feel well and are not taking medicines that impair alertness. Follow any longer driving restriction given by your care team.

#### Take it easy for seven days

You may stand, sit, and take gentle walks. Avoid exercise, sports - including golf and pickleball - and heavy lifting for the first week. Do not lift, push, or pull anything heavier than 10 pounds.

#### Showering and bathing

You may shower once cleared by your discharge team, usually the following day. Gently wash the area and pat it dry. Do not scrub or apply creams or powders to the site.

Avoid pools, hot tubs, and bathtubs for the first week and until the access site has healed. Follow your discharge instructions for removing the dressing.

## **What is expected?**

Some bruising and mild tenderness around the groin are common. They should gradually improve. A rapidly enlarging lump, worsening pain, or increasing swelling needs prompt assessment.

## **Check the site daily**

Contact your care team for increasing redness, warmth, drainage, fever, or worsening discomfort.

If the site starts bleeding, lie down and apply firm pressure directly over it. Call 911 for heavy or persistent bleeding, rapidly increasing swelling, dizziness, or fainting. Do not drive yourself.

# Watchman procedure preparation

Section 5 of 6: Medicines and follow-up imaging

What to expect before, during, and after your Watchman implant.

## SECTION 5

# Medicines and follow-up imaging

## Why medicines still matter

After implantation, your heart tissue gradually grows over the Watchman. During healing, a clot can form on the device's surface. Prescribed blood thinner or antiplatelet medicines help reduce this risk.

Your doctor chooses the combination and duration that best fit your situation. Take these medicines exactly as prescribed, and do not stop them simply because the Watchman has been implanted.

## Checking the implant

Follow-up imaging checks that the device remains in position, seals the appendage appropriately, and has no clot on its surface.

This may involve:

- TEE: An ultrasound probe in the esophagus provides detailed pictures of the heart and implant.
- Cardiac CT: A specialized scan evaluates the implant and its seal.

The first imaging check is commonly around 45 days after implantation. Your team will confirm your schedule and any additional testing.

## **When can medicines change?**

Medication changes depend on your imaging results, bleeding risk, and other medical conditions. A significant leak or clot on the device may require continued treatment and repeat imaging.

Some patients still need long-term anticoagulation for another reason, such as blood clots in the legs or lungs. Watchman does not replace treatment for these conditions.

## **Keep your follow-up appointments**

Bring your medication list and report bleeding, missed doses, or difficulty obtaining your medicines. Tell other healthcare professionals that you have a Watchman implant, and carry your implant identification card.

# Watchman procedure preparation

Section 6 of 6: When to call for help

What to expect before, during, and after your Watchman implant.

## SECTION 6

### When to call for help

Most patients recover without major problems. Knowing which changes to report helps you get care quickly.

#### Call 911 immediately for:

- Stroke symptoms: facial drooping, arm weakness, difficulty speaking, sudden loss of vision, or sudden trouble with balance - even if they go away.
- Severe or persistent chest pain.
- Sudden or severe shortness of breath.
- Fainting or loss of consciousness.
- Heavy or persistent groin bleeding, or rapidly expanding swelling.
- Vomiting blood, or bleeding accompanied by weakness, dizziness, or fainting.

Do not drive yourself. For possible stroke symptoms, note when they began or when you were last feeling normal.

#### Contact your care team promptly for:

- Increasing groin pain, redness, warmth, drainage, or fever.
- New or worsening swelling in a leg.
- Blood in the urine, black or bloody stools, or other unusual bleeding.

- New palpitations, worsening breathlessness, or symptoms that are not improving.
- Missed medicine doses, side effects, or difficulty obtaining your prescriptions.

## **Before you leave the facility**

Make sure you know which medicines to take, how to care for your groin, when your follow-up visit and imaging are scheduled, and whom to call during office hours or after hours.

The Watchman reduces stroke risk but does not eliminate it. Continue to take stroke symptoms seriously and keep all follow-up appointments.

## **Sources & further reading**

Watchman: The implant procedure

Boston Scientific: Recovery and follow-up

Watchman discharge instructions

Updated October 2026. Educational information; your own care plan may differ. Medical illustrations are simplified examples for teaching.