

Is WATCHMAN Right for You?



MANY PEOPLE WITH atrial fibrillation (AFib) take blood thinners to reduce their risk of stroke. But blood thinners come with risks and side effects, making some people unable to take them for a long period of time.

That's why Reid Health offers the WATCHMAN device, an innovative alternative to blood thinners that effectively prevents stroke in people with AFib not caused by a heart valve problem.

Risks of blood thinners

Having AFib puts you at a five times higher risk of having a stroke than people with a regular heart rhythm. This is because the irregular, rapid heartbeat of AFib can cause blood to collect in a part of the heart called the left atrial appendage (LAA). If this blood clots, it can break off and travel to the brain, causing a stroke.

While blood thinners work well to prevent clotting and stroke, they can cause other serious problems when used long term. For some people, the risk of having a major bleeding event can interfere with their quality of life.

Life-changing solution

WATCHMAN is a permanent solution that doesn't pose the risk of bleeding and eliminates the need to take daily medication. After one minimally invasive procedure to implant the device in the LAA, you'll soon be free of the daily worries of the possible side effects of blood thinners.

Ready to learn more about how WATCHMAN can help you live your best life? Call **(765) 962-1337 ext. 6347** for more information.



Reid Health

The WATCHMAN™ Process

What takes place during the WATCHMAN procedure at Reid Health?



YOU DREAM OF no more blood thinners and no more fear of bleeding problems or falls. You're convinced the WATCHMAN device could change your life forever.

But what happens before your life changes? What goes on inside the operating room during the WATCHMAN procedure?

Step 1: Anesthesia

Before surgery can begin, you receive anesthesia. This ensures your comfort throughout the procedure.

Depending on your specific case, you may receive general anesthesia or conscious sedation. At Reid Health, general anesthesia is the common choice.

General anesthesia allows you to fall asleep and remain asleep throughout the procedure. It also ensures you feel no pain during surgery.

With conscious sedation, you relax and feel no pain. You may fall asleep. Whether you sleep or not, recovering from conscious sedation is normally faster than general anesthesia.

Step 2: Catheter insertion and guidance

Your entire WATCHMAN procedure takes place through a single incision.

Once anesthesia begins working, the surgeon makes a tiny incision in your upper leg. The surgeon then inserts a thin, flexible tube called a catheter into the femoral vein and guides the catheter up the artery toward your heart and to the left atrial appendage (LAA).



Step 3: WATCHMAN placement

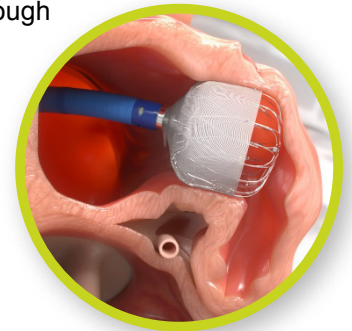
Catheter in position, the surgeon passes a tool through the catheter to the heart. This tool measures the opening of the left atrial appendage.

With this information, the surgeon knows what size WATCHMAN device to use. The surgeon then chooses the proper device and passes it through the catheter into the LAA.

After guiding the device through the catheter, the surgeon opens the WATCHMAN.

Fully expanded, the device presses against the LAA walls. Special anchors grab hold of heart tissue, keeping the device in place. Over time, tissue grows over the WATCHMAN, helping the device do its job.

Before finishing the procedure, the surgeon pulls gently on the device. Special imaging technology shows the surgeon if any blood seeps past the device. If it moves or blood gets through, the WATCHMAN gets repositioned until it fits snugly and no blood passes.



Step 4: Finishing the surgery

Once your device is implanted, the surgeon removes the catheter. The incision gets closed, and your surgery is complete.

In total, the WATCHMAN procedure takes less than two hours.

After completion, you're taken to a room where you rest and recover. You'll probably stay the night.

Step 5: Returning home

In most cases, you return home the day after WATCHMAN surgery. Though your full recovery is not complete at this point, surgery is finished. A better life is coming your way.



What Is

Atrial Fibrillation?

ATRIAL FIBRILLATION (AFIB) is a type of heart arrhythmia. In AFib, the upper chambers of the heart, called the atria, don't function normally, so blood doesn't flow into the lower chambers as well as it should.

Untreated AFib increases your risk for stroke five-fold, according to the American Heart Association. Because your heart has difficulty moving blood through its chambers, blood can pool and form clots. If a clot breaks free and travels to the brain, it can cause a stroke.

Are you at risk for AFib?

Even though you can have AFib at any age, your risk increases as you get older. Some other risk factors include:

- Diabetes
- Family history
- Heart failure
- Heavy alcohol use
- High blood pressure
- Hyperthyroidism
- Obesity
- Smoking

Diagnosis and treatment

AFib is diagnosed after a review of your medical history and symptoms, as well as an analysis of your heart function using cardiac studies such as an electrocardiogram or echocardiogram.

If your doctor determines that you have AFib, you have several treatment options.

- **Medications.** Beta blockers and calcium channel blockers can slow the heart rate, which may improve symptoms. Blood thinners and aspirin can help prevent clotting.
- **Nonsurgical procedures.** Electrical cardioversion (electrical shock to the chest to reset the heart rhythm) and ablation procedures (a catheter destroys the heart tissue causing the irregular heart beat) can help improve symptoms.
- **Surgery.** Pacemaker placement can regulate the heartbeat, and an open-heart maze surgery can create scar tissue to disrupt electrical impulses that cause AFib.

The WATCHMAN device, available at Reid Health, is designed to reduce the risk of stroke without the need for blood thinners in patients with AFib.

Understanding Stroke Risk in Atrial Fibrillation

IF YOU HAVE atrial fibrillation (AFib), you are at an increased risk for stroke — a medical emergency that is already the fifth leading cause of death and a leading cause of disability in the U.S.

There are two types of strokes: ischemic and hemorrhagic.

Ischemic stroke

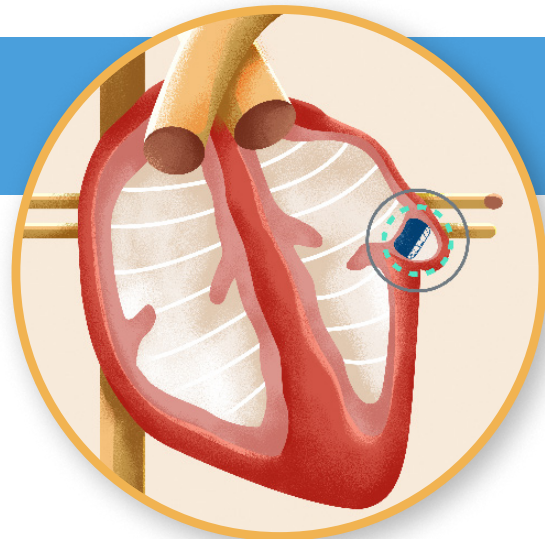
Ischemic stroke is caused by a blood clot that blocks the blood flow to the brain. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 87% of strokes are ischemic strokes. AFib is a common cause of ischemic stroke.

Hemorrhagic stroke

In a hemorrhagic stroke, an artery in the brain leaks blood onto brain cells. The extra pressure from the blood can damage the brain cells. Some common risk factors for hemorrhagic stroke are aneurysms and high blood pressure.

Signs and symptoms of stroke

When you're having a stroke, seconds matter. Learn the signs and symptoms, so if you or someone you know is having a stroke, you can act fast.



Some signs and symptoms include:

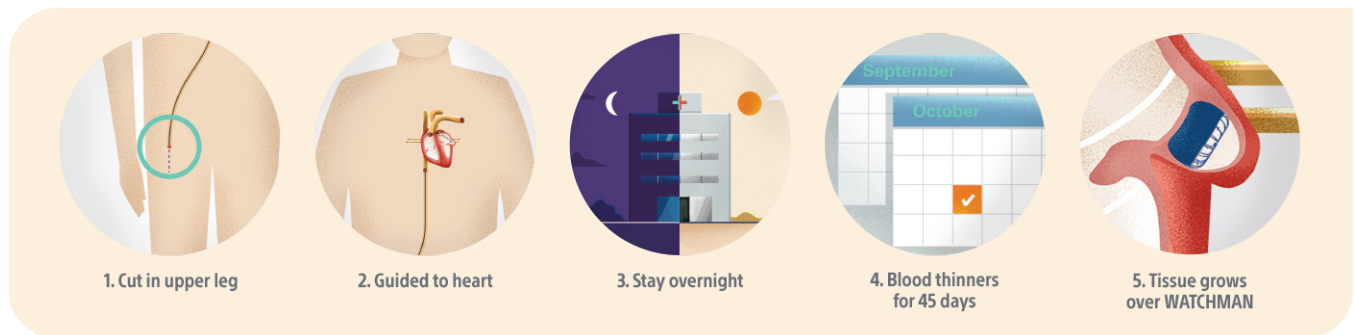
- Arm weakness or numbness on one side
- Confusion
- Difficulty seeing
- Difficulty walking
- Facial drooping on one side of the face
- Severe headache
- Slurred speech or difficulty speaking

Reduce your risk of stroke with the WATCHMAN

If you have non-valvular AFib, you can reduce your risk of stroke with the WATCHMAN implant. The implant closes off the section of the heart where over 90% of stroke-causing blood clots form.

Recovery After the WATCHMAN Procedure

The WATCHMAN device begins to reduce the risk of stroke and bleeding for patients with atrial fibrillation (AFib) almost immediately after the procedure is complete. The WATCHMAN procedure takes less than two hours. Afterward, you can expect to spend a night in the hospital. Your cardiologist will discuss individual aftercare plans before you are discharged. Most patients can resume normal routines within one to two weeks.



When can I stop taking blood-thinning medications?

You will continue taking warfarin (Coumadin) for up to 45 days post-procedure. At that time, a transesophageal echocardiogram (TEE) will be conducted. If the TEE indicates the device is well positioned, you will be able to discontinue the use of warfarin medication.

Reid Health experts report:

- 96% of patients were able to stop blood-thinning medications within 45 days of the WATCHMAN procedure.
- 99% stopped blood-thinning medications completely within one year.

Cardiopulmonary rehabilitation at Reid Health

At Reid, comprehensive cardiopulmonary rehabilitation provides strength-building, education, nutritional counseling, and hands-on support for patients recovering from heart and lung conditions.

The program at Reid is certified by the American Association of Cardiovascular and Pulmonary

Rehabilitation and is available at several convenient locations.

Benefits of cardiac rehabilitation include:

- Health education
- Improved physical endurance
- Smoking cessation
- Stronger heart muscles
- Support for blood sugar management
- Weight loss management

Life with the WATCHMAN device

Patients with increased risk of stroke or excess bleeding due to anti-coagulant medications describe feeling immense relief after the WATCHMAN procedure.

After receiving the WATCHMAN device, patients reported greater levels of energy, returned to an active lifestyle, and had greater confidence in their overall health.

Ready to schedule a consultation?
Visit our [WATCHMAN page](#).