

Going home after your patent foramen ovale (PFO) closure

This leaflet explains what to expect and what to watch out for when you go home after your PFO closure. If you have any more questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

How should I care for my wound?

It is normal for your wound to be tender for a few days after the procedure. It is also normal for a bruise to develop.

However, if you notice any of the following, please contact your GP:

- a hard, tender lump under the skin around the wound (a pea-sized lump is normal)
- any increase in pain, swelling, redness and/or discharge at the site
- a cold foot or hand on the same side as the procedure
- a raised temperature/fever.

If your wound starts to bleed you should apply pressure to the area, keeping your leg as straight as possible.

If the bleeding does not stop **after 10 minutes**, dial 999. **Do not drive yourself to the Emergency Department (A&E).**

If the bleeding stops within 10 minutes, keep your leg as still as possible for the following four hours. If bleeding re-starts, go to your nearest Emergency department (**do not drive yourself**).

You can shower when you get home, but avoid rubbing the wound site or having a bath for five days. Do not put creams, talcum powder or soap directly onto the site for a week after the procedure, to avoid irritation and reduce the likelihood of infection.

What to expect

It is normal to have some palpitations (fast heart beats) after the procedure for some days. These normally last less than a minute and are not dangerous. If you are having prolonged palpitations or you feel unwell with them, please contact the Catheter Lab Day Unit or the cardiology secretary (details at the end of this leaflet).

Can I eat and drink as normal?

You can eat as usual. Drink plenty of fluids (particularly water) but avoid alcohol for 24 hours. You will have a transoesophageal echocardiogram while you are under general anaesthetic. This can cause you to have a sore throat for a few days after the procedure. During this time please take care to make sure hot drinks and food have cooled properly before eating them.

Resuming activities

You will usually be able to return to work within a week unless you have a manual job that involves heavy lifting. Check with your doctor or nurse when you can go back to work, before you leave the hospital. You can self-certify for your absence from work, but if you think that you will require a sick certificate, please contact your GP.

- Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous physical exercise (running, hill climbing, swimming and competitive sports) for at least five days.
- It is normally safe to fly within a week of the procedure – you should check with your airline and insurance company.

Otherwise you can return to normal activities (including sex) when you feel ready.

When you are at home it is very important that you follow the advice given to you below, for your safety. Although you might feel fine, your judgement and coordination may still be affected for 48 hours after your anaesthetic.

Please rest at home for at least 24 hours after the procedure. Do not go to work or school on the day after your procedure. For 48 hours after the surgery, **do not:**

- drive any vehicle, including a bicycle
- operate any machinery
- cook, use sharp utensils or pour hot or boiling liquids
- drink alcohol
- smoke
- take sleeping tablets
- make important decisions, or sign contracts.

If you are worried about your condition when you are home, please telephone the Catheter Lab Day Unit (details below).

Useful sources of information

British Heart Foundation, **w:** www.bhf.org.uk, **helpline:** 0300 330 3311

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your recovery when you are at home, please call the ward you stayed on:

Becket Ward, **t:** 020 7188 0724 (out of normal hours)

Stephen Ward, **t:** 020 7188 6463

Catheter Lab Day Unit, **t:** 020 7188 7188 extension 58013, Monday to Friday, 7am-5pm.

Alternatively, please call the cardiac rehabilitation advice line, **t:** 020 7188 0946 or the cardiology secretary, **t:** 020 71881049, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

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