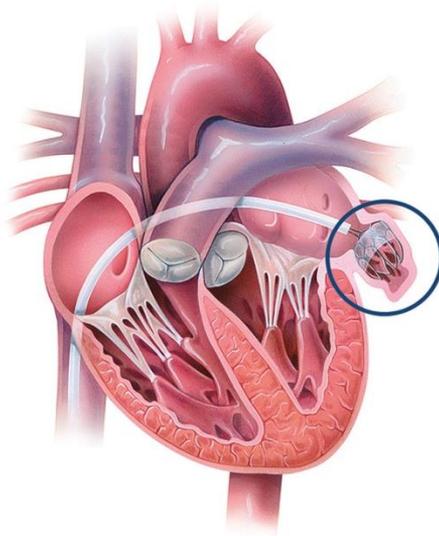

Left Atrial Appendage Closure



Cross-section of the heart
Placing the closure device

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**What to expect
before, during, and after
the procedure**



Cardiac Services BC
Provincial Health Services Authority

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Introduction

You have atrial fibrillation. This increases the chances of a blood clot forming in your heart, travelling to your brain, and causing a stroke. Most people can take blood thinners to lower these chances, however your doctor has determined that taking blood thinners might not be the best option for you.

You recently had tests and meetings with a team of healthcare specialists to review your health information and explore other ways to prevent stroke for you.

This team met and recommended left atrial appendage closure (LAAC) as the best option for you. This means having your left atrial appendage, a part of the heart, closed off using this procedure. We know most blood clots form in this part of the heart, so this procedure should lessen the chances of a stroke.

You are now on the waitlist for this procedure. This means that you come for the procedure as soon as we give you a procedure date.

To get ready for your procedure, please read this booklet and share it with your family. We hope it helps to answer any questions you might have.

During the time you are on the waitlist, tell healthcare providers treating you that you are planning to have LAAC.

If your medical condition changes, please notify the LAAC coordinator or LAAC doctor's office because:

- ♥ You might need to be seen again by the LAAC team.
- ♥ Your procedure date might need to be changed.

Before the Procedure

What can you expect while on the LAAC waitlist?

Most people wait several weeks to months before they have their LAAC procedure. Your time on the waitlist will depend on many things, including your overall health and how many people are waiting for this procedure. The LAAC coordinator will give you an estimate of how long you might wait.

When your procedure date is booked, the goal is to let you know well before the date of the procedure so you can arrange your travel, if necessary. Also note that sometimes we need to rearrange people's procedures to another day or time because of emergencies.

Who looks after your health while on the waitlist?

It is important to attend your appointments, whether or not you feel well. You need to continue to have your health monitored and treated by your regular doctor(s). If you are not able to attend any appointments, please make sure you call and reschedule them.

The LAAC doctors are responsible for your medical care when you come into the hospital for your LAAC procedure. After you go home, you will continue to see your regular doctor(s).

What if your health changes while on the waitlist?

Please contact the LAAC coordinator as soon as possible if you have:

- any changes to your health
- events such as bleeding, stroke, or mini-stroke (called a transient ischemic attack or TIA)

How can you help yourself get ready for the procedure?

While you are waiting for the LAAC procedure, there are many things you can do to keep healthy.

Eat healthy

It is important that you eat as well as possible to prepare for the procedure. If you have been instructed to limit the amount of liquids and salt in your diet, continue to follow these instructions.

Keep active

Be as active as you can, but go at your own pace as everyone is different. Remember to balance activities throughout the day, alternating activity with periods of rest.

Be active at a time when you feel rested, such as first thing in the morning or after a nap. Slow down if you get short of breath, have chest pain, or feel faint.

Take your medicines as directed

Continue to take your medicines as your doctor(s) has prescribed. If you notice any unwanted effects from a medicine or the medicine is not working as it should, contact the doctor who prescribed that medicine. Your medicines might need to be adjusted.

Do not make any changes to your medicines unless you are advised to by your doctor(s).

Plan a ride to and from the hospital

- ♥ Arrange for someone to take you to the hospital for the procedure.
- ♥ Arrange for someone to take you home from the hospital after the procedure. You will not be allowed to leave the hospital alone.
- ♥ If you live far away from the hospital, talk with your doctor about whether you should stay close to the hospital for at least one night before your trip home.

Plan ahead

It is very important to plan ahead for your personal and financial affairs. If you are not able to do this on your own, please have someone help you with this.

- ♥ Talk to your family about the care you wish to receive should your health condition worsen and you cannot speak for yourself.
- ♥ Arrange for someone to stay with you for at least one night after the procedure.
- ♥ Arrange for someone to help with your everyday activities after the procedure, such as showering, dressing, cooking, etc. If you do not have family or friends to help you at home, you might need home care services.

If support at home is a concern, make an appointment to see your family doctor to talk about the kind of help you might need and make a plan.

Follow any specific instructions to prepare

Everyone who has this procedure is given specific instructions on how to prepare for the procedure and where to go on the day of the procedure.

You might get these instructions from the hospital's Pre-Admission Clinic or the LAAC coordinator.

Before coming for the procedure:

- ♥ You might be sent for an electrocardiogram (ECG), some blood tests, an echocardiogram (heart ultrasound), and a CT scan.
- ♥ You will be given specific instructions on how to take your medications. It is important to carefully review these instructions and take your medications exactly as directed.
- ♥ Call the LAAC coordinator if you have any questions or concerns about these instructions.
- ♥ **Do not eat anything after midnight (12:00_{AM})** the night before the procedure.
- ♥ **Stop drinking liquids 3 hours before** you are to arrive at the hospital (unless told something different).

While in the Hospital

Most people who have a LAAC procedure come to hospital the morning of the procedure. We tell you when to come to the hospital.

At the hospital

- ♥ We check you in and ask you to change into a hospital gown. We suggest you give all of your belongings to your family until after the procedure.
- ♥ The LAAC doctor sees you to review the benefits and risks of the procedure. You are asked to sign the consent for the procedure at this time.
- ♥ We ask you some questions about your health history. Make sure you tell us if you have any allergies.
- ♥ We might take some blood for testing.
- ♥ The anesthesiologist (the sleep doctor) sees you and explains how you will be asleep through the procedure.
- ♥ Just before you go into the procedure room, we might ask you to remove your denture(s), glasses, and/or hearing aid(s). Give these items to your family or friend.

In the procedure room

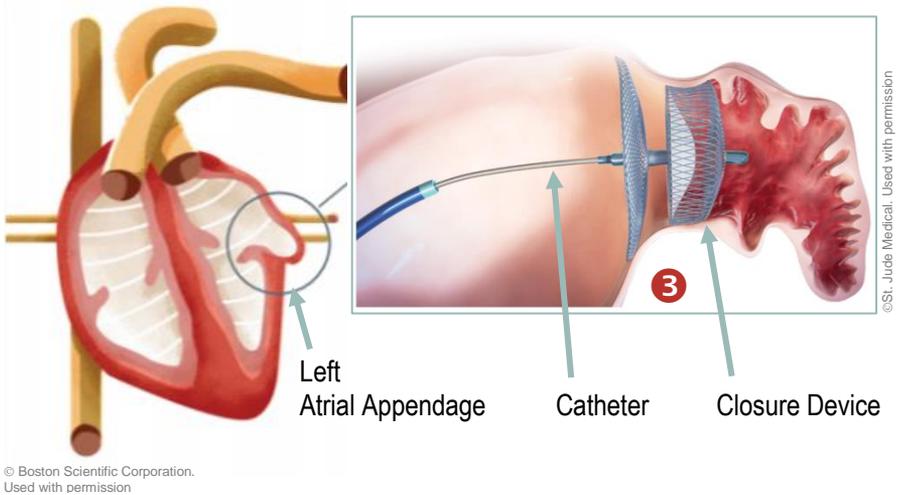
You will notice there are a lot of people, equipment, and activity in the room. This is all to help prepare for your procedure.

- ♥ We start an intravenous (IV).
- ♥ We attach you to a heart monitor.
- ♥ The anesthesiologist gives you medicine to put you into a deep sleep (general anesthetic) and puts a breathing tube in place. Another doctor puts an ultrasound probe in place.
- ♥ Both sides of your groin are cleaned with a cleaning solution and a sterile (germ-free) sheet is draped over you to keep the areas clean.

During the procedure

- ♥ A small opening is made in the large vein in your groin (called the femoral vein). ①
- ♥ Through this small opening, the doctor threads a small, flexible, hollow tube (called a catheter) up into your heart. ②
- ♥ The doctor uses a special x-ray and ultrasound machine to see inside your heart and place the closure device in the left atrial appendage. ③





- ♥ Once the LAAC device is secured in place, the catheter is removed.
- ♥ A bandage is placed over the skin opening.
- ♥ It takes 1 to 2 hours to do the procedure.

After the procedure

We move you from the procedure room to a nursing unit for care and monitoring.

- ♥ You must lie flat for the first few hours and keep your affected leg straight. This is to make sure that you don't start to bleed through the small opening in your groin. Your nurse will change and remove your bandage as needed.
- ♥ Your nurse checks you often, measuring your blood pressure, heart rate, oxygen level, and checking your groin area and lower legs.
- ♥ You are attached to a heart monitor so we can watch your heart rhythm.
- ♥ You continue to have an intravenous (IV).
If needed, we can use it to:
 - Give fluids and medications.
 - Monitor your blood pressure.

Most people go home the day after their LAAC procedure. Some go home the same day.

Drinking and eating

We let you know when it is safe to eat and drink. You will begin slowly with liquids and then progress to eating solid food.

You might not have much of an appetite for a few days. You still need to eat. To recover and heal, your body needs extra calories and nutrients, especially protein.

If you have any questions about your diet or you have special diet needs, talk to your nurse.

Managing pain

Most people do not have a lot of pain after the LAAC procedure. However, if you do have any pain or discomfort, it is very important to tell your nurse.

Some people worry about taking too much pain medication. It is best to take as much as you need to keep your pain under control. As you recover, you will not need as much.

Sometimes, people get a bruise at the groin and it can get quite large. The bruise will slowly go away.

Getting moving

It is important that you progress toward doing things on your own, such as going to the toilet, washing, and dressing.

Our goal is to have you progress from sitting in bed to walking as soon as it is safe. Most people get up and walk on the day of the procedure.

Having visitors

We do not have any specified visiting hours.

We do ask visitors to check in with your nurse each time they wish to visit. They might need to wait for a little while before they can come in to visit. We might need to limit the number of visitors at any one time for various reasons.

Each hospital unit has specific rules about visiting. Please ask your nurse.

Going Home after Your Procedure

Getting ready to go home

Please make sure you have a plan for how you will get home. Even if you were brought to hospital by ambulance or air ambulance, you must arrange your return trip home. It is best to have a family member or friend travel with you.

If you live far away from the hospital, talk with your doctor about whether you should stay close to the hospital for at least one night before your trip home.

You will need help when you first go home. It is hard to predict how much help you will need, and for how long, so it is best to be as prepared as you can.

Your medications

Most people return to taking their regular heart medications once they leave the hospital. Some of your medications might have changed. You will be prescribed new medication to take for a short time to prevent blood clots on your LAAC device.

Your LAAC doctor will review your medications with you, give you a prescription, and make sure you understand what medications to take and for how long. If you have questions, speak to your pharmacist or your doctor.

Recovering at home

Everyone recovers differently. It depends on your health before the procedure.

Drinking and Eating

- ♥ Before the procedure, if you had to limit the amount of liquid you could drink, continue to do this until you speak with your family doctor or your heart doctor.
- ♥ Eating well is an important part of your recovery. If you were on a specific diet (such as low salt) before your LAAC procedure, continue with this diet unless your doctor tells you something different.
- ♥ Let your doctor know if you notice any changes in your appetite.

Care of your Access Site

Your 'access site' is the small cut made in your groin to insert the catheter.

- ♥ For at least 7 days, take only showers. No tub baths. Do not go in swimming pools or hot tubs.
- ♥ Check your access site every day.

What to watch for:

- ♥ Look for signs of an infection:
 - redness and warmth around the access site that does not go away
 - yellow or green pus from the access site
 - chills and a fever over 38°C (101°F)
 - new pain at the access site or pain does not ease with pain medicine
 - new numbness around the access site or numbness or weakness in the leg

If you notice any of these signs, see your doctor as soon as possible.

- ♥ Look for signs of bleeding.

It is normal to have a bruise or a soft lump at the access site.

It is **not normal** if the lump quickly gets bigger or harder. This can mean you are bleeding on the inside.

If you notice the lump getting bigger:



- **Lie down right away.**
- Ask someone to **press down hard** just above your access site **for 15 minutes**. They **must not stop pressing** at any time during this 15 minutes just to check the lump.
- If the lump has not gotten bigger (the bleeding has stopped) after 15 minutes, rest and **stay lying down for at least 2 hours**.
- If the lump continues to get bigger after 15 minutes, **call 9-1-1** and ask for an ambulance. Do not drive yourself or ask anyone to drive you.

- ♥ Look for signs of stroke (FAST):
- face drooping, especially on only one side
 - new weakness on one side of the body
 - slurred speech or difficulty speaking

If you experience any of the signs of stroke, call 9-1-1 right away.

Learn the signs of stroke

Face is it drooping?

Arms can you raise both?

Speech is it slurred or jumbled?

Time to call 9-1-1 right away.

Act **F A S T** because the quicker you act, the more of the person you save.

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Activity and Rest

- ♥ For the first few days, balance activity with rest.
- ♥ Daily activity and exercise are an important part of your recovery. Gradually increase your activity and exercise.
- ♥ You might notice your symptoms improving soon after your procedure. However, it is important to pace yourself.
- ♥ For at least 1 week, **do not** lift, push, or pull anything that weighs over 4 to 5 kilograms (10 pounds – a 4 litre jug of milk weighs almost 10 pounds). This means not doing such things as carrying children, laundry, and groceries, or vacuuming, gardening, or golfing.
- ♥ If your community has a cardiac rehabilitation or cardiac exercise program, we suggest you attend when your doctor says it is safe for you. Talk to your family doctor or heart doctor about programs in your area.

This type of program can help you take part in safe and heart healthy activities. You learn:

- about heart health
- how to lower the risk of more heart problems
- how to safely return to everyday activities and hobbies

Care of your LAAC device

- ♥ If you go to Emergency or are admitted to a hospital within the first 3 months after your procedure:
 - Show the doctor or nurse your wallet card
 - Ask the doctor or nurse to call the LAAC coordinator or LAAC doctor.

- ♥ Always tell your dentist and other doctors that you have a LAAC device. Show them your wallet card. Before certain dental or medical procedures, you might need antibiotics to protect your new device.

Driving

- ♥ You cannot drive for 24 hours after your procedure because you had a general anesthetic

- ♥ Ask your doctor about when you might return to driving. If a doctor has told you in the past that you cannot drive, you must check with that doctor before you drive again.

Follow-up appointments and tests

- ♥ Make an appointment to see your family doctor 1 to 2 weeks after you get home.
- ♥ Make an appointment to see your heart doctor (cardiologist or internist) 2 to 3 months after your LAAC procedure.
- ♥ About 4 weeks after your procedure, you will have an echocardiogram. We will call you to arrange this.

If you have not been contacted within 2 weeks after going home, please call the LAAC coordinator or LAAC doctor's office.

- ♥ You will have another echocardiogram or a CT scan about 3 months after your procedure.
- ♥ Following your echocardiogram or CT scan, we schedule you for a follow-up appointment with the LAAC nurse and doctor.
- ♥ You will see the LAAC doctor every year.

My LAAC Clinic contact information

LAAC doctor: _____

Phone: _____

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March 2019



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