



Alternative to Blood Thinners

Take a short survey to see if an implant could be the right stroke-risk reduction option for you

Start Here

Is There an Alternative to Blood Thinners?

There are different treatments available to reduce your stroke risk if you have AFib. The most common are blood thinners. Learn about blood thinner alternatives below.

Blood Thinner Medications and AFib Stroke Risk

Blood thinner medications, also called anticoagulant drugs, are an effective way to lower the risk of stroke in people with atrial fibrillation, or AFib, not caused by a heart valve problem.¹

The blood thinner warfarin (also known as Coumadin®) has been around for more than 60 years. There are also several newer blood thinners available now, including Eliquis® (apixaban), Pradaxa® (dabigatran), Xarelto® (rivaroxaban), and Savaysa® (edoxaban).

For people who need an alternative, there are heart procedures that can effectively reduce the risk of stroke. WATCHMAN is a permanent implant that does just that.²

Learn more about who WATCHMAN is for

WATCHMAN or Blood Thinners?

Like blood thinners, WATCHMAN can effectively reduce stroke risk.² This permanent implant is for people with AFib not caused by a heart valve problem who need an alternative.

Beyond Blood Thinners

Over a 1/3 of people with AFib feel trapped between the fear of having a stroke and fear of the risks associated with blood thinners. In fact, **more than 4 in 5 people with AFib taking a blood thinner (83%) say the different treatment to help**

See if the WATCHMAN Implant is right for you >

See if it's right for you

See What Makes WATCHMAN Different

Warfarin vs Other Blood Thinner Medications

Warfarin is a common blood thinner prescribed to reduce stroke risk in people with atrial fibrillation. It’s been used for decades and is typically less expensive than the newer types of blood thinners—but it comes with certain requirements and restrictions.^{4,5}

Regular blood tests: With warfarin, you have to get regular blood tests—from twice a week to once a month, depending on your doctor’s recommendation. These tests measure your INR, or International Normalized Ratio, a number that tells how long it takes for your blood to clot.

Dietary guidelines: Certain foods, like leafy greens, can affect your INR if you’re taking warfarin. Forgetting to take your medication can also put you out of range. If you’re outside the recommended INR, you may be at higher risk for stroke or higher risk for bleeding.

Newer blood thinners don’t come with the same dietary restrictions as warfarin, and they don’t require INR testing. If you have trouble with your warfarin treatment plan, your cardiologist may recommend that you take a different type of blood thinner. While these blood thinners offer additional options to warfarin, each medication comes with its own risks and benefits.¹

Blood Thinner Medications and Bleeding Risks

Blood thinners, or anticoagulants, are very effective at reducing the risk of stroke in people with atrial fibrillation, and most people can take them for years without serious side effects. But because blood thinners help prevent clots by thinning the blood, they also increase the risk of bleeding.¹

Minor bleeding: Most bleeding events are minor and easily treated, like a cut taking longer than normal to stop bleeding. Some people bruise more easily on blood thinners. You should discuss any of these symptoms with your doctor.

Major bleeding: In other cases, bleeding can be serious and require medical help or blood transfusions. Sometimes, the bleeding can be life-threatening, for example, when bleeding in the brain causes a stroke.

When considering your treatment options, your cardiologist will weigh your risk of a stroke against your risk of a serious bleeding problem. These risks depend on several factors—for some people the risk of bleeding is higher than for others.¹

Blood Thinners Come with Challenges

Warfarin	All Blood Thinners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bleeding Risk That Grows Over Time• Daily Pills• Continuing to Take Medication as Prescribed Long-Term• Regular Blood (INR) Tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bleeding Risk That Grows Over Time• Daily or 2x/Daily Pills• Continuing to Take Medication Long-Term• Complicates Surgical Procedures

See if the WATCHMAN Implant is right for you > X

- Food and Drug Interaction Issues
- Complicates Surgical Procedures
- High Ongoing Cost

Hear from a WATCHMAN Patient

Patient Ambassadors are a community of people that have received the WATCHMAN implant and have volunteered to share their personal experiences with potential patients.

Speak to one of our Education Specialists to learn more

Call 1-844-355-9114

Questions about WATCHMAN?

WATCHMAN Educational Specialists are trained professionals with healthcare experience. They're here to help answer your questions.

Call 1-855-893-2606

Monday to Friday, 8AM to 5PM Central Time

If You Can't Take a Blood Thinner Long Term

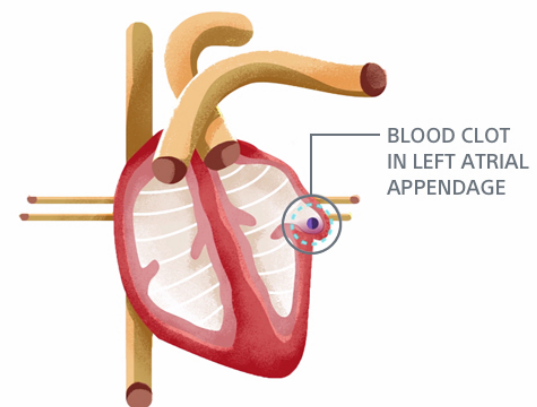
Some people with atrial fibrillation who *should* take blood thinners to reduce their stroke risk *can't* due to their lifestyle or health history. Other AFib patients choose not to take blood thinners due to side effects or for other reasons.¹

Left atrial appendage closure: A procedure called left atrial appendage closure provides an alternative to blood thinners for people who need one. The left atrial appendage is a small pouch at the top of the heart. When a blood clot escapes from the left atrial appendage and travels to another part of the body, it can cut off the blood supply to the brain, causing a stroke. In people with AFib not caused by a heart valve problem, more than 90% of stroke-causing clots that come from the heart are formed in the left atrial appendage (LAA).⁶ Closing off the LAA is an effective way to reduce stroke risk in these people.

The WATCHMAN Implant is a left atrial appendage closure procedure. It is the most implanted, FDA-approved device proven to reduce stroke risk in people with atrial fibrillation not caused by a heart valve problem (also referred to as non-valvular AFib).

[Learn more about the WATCHMAN procedure ►](#)

It's important to understand that a stroke can be caused by factors other than a clot escaping from the left atrial appendage. These causes can include high blood pressure and the narrowing of blood vessels to the brain.⁷ Left atrial appendage closure will not prevent these other causes of stroke.



How Is WATCHMAN an Alternative to Blood Thinners?

WATCHMAN is a one-time, minimally invasive procedure that permanently reduces the risk of stroke and bleeding worry.

[Learn more about WATCHMAN as an alternative to blood thinners ►](#)

Science always looks for ways to make effective treatments even better. WATCHMAN is no exception. The WATCHMAN FLX design is an advancement that enables the implant to fit a greater number of patients, giving more people than ever a safe, effective alternative to blood thinners should they need one.

In a clinical trial, 96% of people were able to stop taking blood thinners just 45 days after the WATCHMAN FLX procedure.⁸

This can mean a lower risk of bleeding from long-term blood thinner use.⁹ After getting WATCHMAN and stopping their blood thinner, patients take aspirin and clopidogrel (Plavix®) for 6 months. After that, they take only aspirin on an ongoing basis.



WATCHMAN may be right for you if you have one of following:

- Major bleeding while taking blood thinners
- A lifestyle, occupation, or health concern that puts you at risk for bleeding
- Have difficulties taking blood thinners as prescribed

It's important to understand that, like blood thinners, WATCHMAN does not cure AFib. But it does offer people with AFib not caused by a heart valve problem a potentially life-changing alternative to taking daily blood thinners long term.

Questions to Ask Your Doctor

If you have atrial fibrillation not caused by a heart valve problem and need an alternative to blood thinners, here are some questions to ask your cardiologist:

- What are the risks and benefits of the different blood thinners?
- Does my lifestyle or health history put me at risk for serious bleeding?
- Am I a candidate for left atrial appendage closure?
- What should I know about the WATCHMAN Implant?
- What are the differences in cost between blood thinners and the WATCHMAN Implant?

If you think WATCHMAN could be right for you, answer a few questions and get a personalized guide for talking to your cardiologist.

[Answer a few questions and get a customized guide](#)

See if the WATCHMAN
Implant is right for you >



WATCHMAN is the only FDA-approved implant proven to safely and effectively lower stroke risk in people with AFib not caused by heart valve problems.²

NEXT: Why Choose WATCHMAN

WATCHMAN is for people with atrial fibrillation not caused by a heart valve problem who need an alternative to blood thinners. This website is intended to provide patients and caregivers with some information about the WATCHMAN Implant. It may help prepare you for talking to your doctor about your options for reducing stroke risk.

Important Safety Information

The WATCHMAN and WATCHMAN FLX Devices are permanent implants designed to close the left atrial appendage in the heart in an effort to reduce the risk of stroke.

With all medical procedures there are risks associated with the implant procedure and the use of the device. The risks include but are not limited to accidental heart puncture, air embolism, allergic reaction, anemia, anesthesia risks, arrhythmias, AV (Arteriovenous) fistula, bleeding or throat pain from the TEE (Trans Esophageal Echo) probe, blood clot or air bubbles in the lungs or other organs, bruising at the catheter insertion site, clot formation on the device, cranial bleed, excessive bleeding, gastrointestinal bleeding, groin puncture bleed, hypotension, infection/pneumonia, pneumothorax, pulmonary edema, pulmonary vein obstruction, renal failure, stroke, thrombosis and transient ischemic attack. In rare cases death can occur.

Be sure to talk with your doctor so that you thoroughly understand all of the risks and benefits associated with the implantation of the device.

References:

1. National Stroke Association. Making the Afib-Stroke Connection. <https://www.stroke.org/sites/default/files/resources/Afib-Connection%20for%20hcp.pdf>. Published 2012. Accessed September 1, 2016.
2. Holmes DR Jr, Doshi SK, Kar S, et al. Left atrial appendage closure as an alternative to warfarin for stroke prevention in atrial brillation: a patient-level meta-analysis. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2015;65(24):2614-2623.
3. WatchUsNow.com. The Harris Poll online survey. Boston Scientific. SH-574213-AA. <https://www.watchusnow.com/?page=d75be9d4-ba36-456c-a72d-dc3df07892da>. Accessed March 28, 2019.
4. Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). Blood Thinner Pills: Your Guide to Using Them Safely. <http://www.ahrq.gov/sites/default/files/wysiwyg/patients-consumers/diagnosis-treatment/treatments/btpills/btpills.pdf>. Published September 2015. Accessed September 8, 2016.
5. American Heart Association website. <http://www.heart.org/HEARTORG/>. Published 2017. Accessed June 1, 2017.
6. Blackshear JL, Odell JA. Appendage obliteration to reduce stroke in cardiac surgical patients with atrial fibrillation. *Ann Thorac Surg*. 1996;61:755-759.
7. American Stroke Association website. <http://www.strokeassociation.org/STROKEORG/>. American Heart Association. Published 2017. Accessed May 31, 2017. Cleveland Clinic. Atrial fibrillation (Afib). <http://my.clevelandclinic.org/services/heart/disorders/arrhythmia/atrial-fibrillation-afib>. Published May 2015. Accessed August 25, 2016.
8. Kar, S., et al, Primary Outcome Evaluation of the Next Generation LAAC Device: Results from the PINNACLE FLX Trial, *Circulation*, 2021.
9. Price MJ, Reddy VY, Valderrábano M, et al. Bleeding outcomes after left atrial appendage closure compared with long-term warfarin. *JACC Cardiovasc Interv*. 2015;8(15):1925-1932



USA

Boston Scientific is dedicated to transforming lives through innovative medical solutions that improve the health of patients globally.

FOLLOW US



