



McLAREN FLINT

PATENT FORAMEN OVALE (PFO)

A patent foramen ovale or PFO is something that we are all born with. When you're still in the fetal stage of life, a small section of your heart has a hole, the foramen ovale, that allows blood to travel back and forth between the right and left atriums of the heart.

The right atrium is the return area in your heart for unoxygenated blood, and the left atrium of the heart receives oxygenated blood from your lungs.

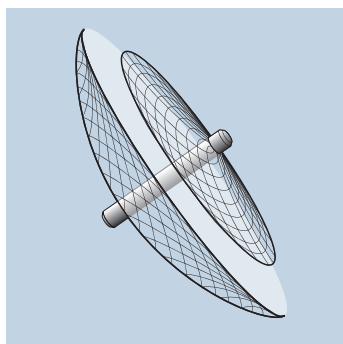
This hole usually seals off after birth, leaving the unoxygenated blood on one side and the oxygenated blood on the other.

However, the foramen ovale doesn't always close after birth.

Sometimes it remains "open," or patent, which leads to a PFO. This means that unoxygenated blood and oxygenated blood will travel back and forth between the two chambers.

This can lead to a series of difficulties as you age – the most significant being the formation of clots due to the swirling of blood between the two chambers. These clots could travel to the brain, leading to a stroke.

To stop the exchange of your oxygenated and unoxygenated blood, your doctor can place a closure device over this hole, covering it so the blood doesn't mix and there is a smoother blood flow throughout your heart.



In the cath lab the doctor will start a small access site in the femoral vein in your groin. This is like starting an IV, but in a bigger vein.

From the access site the doctor can advance a catheter over a guidewire into your heart and through the PFO.

The doctor then advances the closure device through the PFO, pulls it snug on the oxygenated side of the heart and then deploys another cover on the unoxygenated side of your heart. This sandwiches the PFO and closes it off.

Over time, the body will grow tissue over the closure device, which will allow for a complete seal. This puts an end to mixing and swirling of the blood.

POST PROCEDURE

Take it easy. While PFO closure isn't truly a surgery, it is a procedure that you will need to recover from.

- The access site in your groin will be sore for several days and feel like a bruise.
- Take care not to saturate that area for about a week.
- Showers are okay, but avoid baths, swimming or hot tubs for at least one week.
- Try to limit walking upstairs, bending or lifting anything over 10 pounds as much as possible for the next week as well.

Driving is out for today. You were given medicine during your procedure that will make you feel tired for most of the day. Take advantage of this opportunity to get some extra rest and allow yourself time to heal.