

HeartMate 3™

Common Questions

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1. How do I know if my driveline is infected?

If you notice any changes or if your driveline gets pulled, tell your care team right away so it can be treated quickly. Signs/symptoms of a driveline infection can include: Redness, pain or tenderness at the site, swelling and warmth, drainage (new or increased), or fever.

2. Why am I bleeding more easily?

When on blood thinners, you are always at risk of bleeding. You may experience bleeding from your gums when brushing your teeth and your cuts may bleed more than normal. Girls may experience heavier bleeding during menstrual periods may need to seek additional treatment.

Blood thinners often lead to nose bleeds. To prevent nose bleeds, use petroleum jelly or saline nose spray in your nasal passages during cold, dry weather. If you have a nose bleed, stay calm, look forward and hold pressure at the bridge of your nose for 10 minutes without letting go.

When should I call my care team about bleeding? Let your care team know if you can't stop the bleeding, or if you have frequent nose bleeds. Rarely, you may have a more serious bleed in your belly. Signs and symptoms of a GI bleed include: belly pain and no appetite, vomit with blood in it, black, tarry, or sticky stools.

3. My VAD Team told me I am at a higher risk of stroke. How do I know if I am having a stroke?

A stroke is caused by bleeding or a blood clot in your brain. Both may cause injury to your brain. Notify your care team or call 911 if you have any of the following symptoms: headaches that are different than usual, numbness and/or tingling on one side of the body, weakness on one side of the body, losing feeling and/or movement in the legs or arms, slurring words or trouble when talking, facial expressions and movements don't match (or mirror) on each side of the face, pupil (the dark circle in the middle of the eye) sizes don't match.

4. What other VAD complications do I need to monitor for while outpatient?

Hemolysis: When your red blood cells break down, it's called hemolysis. Hemolysis may occur for multiple reasons, the most concerning being a mechanical problem with the VAD. If a clot develops in the VAD it can affect the flow, causing red blood cells to break down as they pass through it. Notify your care team if you have any of the following symptoms: pink, red, cola, or tea colored urine, increased pump power/flow that is out of your range, decreased pump power that is out of your range.

Pump Clots: Your VAD could develop a clot inside of it, causing it not to work properly. Notify your care team if you have any of the following symptoms: pink, red, cola, or tea colored urine, increased pump power/flow that is out of your range, heart failure symptoms such as shortness of breath, exhaustion, or abdominal pain/vomiting.

5. Will I be able to take a bath or shower?

Taking a bath [and swimming] is NOT allowed since you might get water inside the VAD. You can take showers once approved by your doctor and you have been trained on how to protect your external VAD equipment.

6. Which over the counter medicines can I take?

Check with your care team before starting any prescription, over the counter medicine, or other medicines or remedies. When on a VAD, you may have pain, especially after your surgery. You **CANNOT** take NSAIDs (Motrin, Advil, Ibuprofen), natural or herbal, because it changes how your blood clots. You **CAN** take Acetaminophen (Tylenol).

7. Is exercising possible while being supported by the LVAD?

Yes. VAD patients have participated in many different activities including biking, ballroom dancing, fishing, and golf. However, you should avoid exercising in very hot, humid conditions or very cold temperatures. Walking is an excellent exercise for VAD patients. Consider going to the local mall for a safer, more comfortable walking environment. Contact sports, excessive jumping, and swimming are **NOT** allowed. Review exercise plans with your doctor and the Cardiac Rehabilitation team.

8. Do I need to follow a special diet?

Healthy eating is a good idea for everyone, but it is especially important for people living with a heart pump. Because of the pump's location inside the body, some patients may lose their appetite after implant surgery, but this usually goes away over time. You may find it easier to eat many smaller meals throughout the day (instead of fewer larger meals). Until your appetite comes back, your diet might be supplemented with high-calorie or high-protein liquid beverages. You may also have special diet instructions if you are taking Coumadin.

9. Can I travel?

Driving: Every state has different rules about driving with a VAD, make sure to discuss this with your care team. If you are a licensed driver, use caution within the first 90 days after surgery because you may still be taking medication that may affect your concentration. Some medications will cause side effects that you won't have adjusted to yet. When you start driving again, take short supervised trips to get used to driving with the new equipment. If you feel dizzy, short of breath, or have blurred vision, pull over to the side of the road immediately and call for help.

Long Distance/Air Travel: You will be able to travel, even on a plane but it takes some extra planning with your care team to make sure you're safe. You will need a travel plan and an emergency action plan for long-distance trips. Your care team will make this plan and contact other ACTION hospitals to discuss your care. When traveling by plane, you will not go through standard security. You will need to tell the airline agents you have a medical device and they will take you through a separate security lane.

10. Can I return to school/work?

It will vary from hospital to hospital, but once your care team decides it's safe for you to return home and go to school or work, multiple steps will occur to ensure your safety. Make sure to have someone with you who is trained to help with alarms and emergencies.

11. Do I still need to schedule other routine doctors' visits?

Primary Care Physician: Continue to schedule routine check-ups with your primary doctor. When you have a VAD you can still get common colds or other infections. Do everything you can to avoid getting sick. Wash your hands frequently, avoid contact with others who are sick, and get a flu shot every year. Always let your care team know if you get sick. They may direct you to your primary care doctor or ask to see you themselves.

Dentist: Good dental hygiene is very important. If you get an infection in your mouth it could lead to an infection in your VAD. Before you go to the dentist for a cleaning or other dental work notify your VAD team. They may prescribe you antibiotics to take prior to your appointment called an antibiotic prophylaxis.

For other questions, please contact your clinical care team.