

# Patent Foramen Ovale: A Comprehensive Guide to Understanding This Common Heart Defect

Patent foramen ovale (PFO) is a common heart defect that occurs when the foramen ovale, a small opening in the atrial septum that allows blood to flow between the two upper chambers of the heart during fetal development, fails to close after birth. In most cases, PFO is a harmless condition that does not cause any symptoms or require treatment.



## Patent Foramen Ovale

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

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However, in some cases, PFO can lead to serious complications, such as stroke, paradoxical embolism, and migraine headaches. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the potential risks and benefits of PFO closure.

## Causes

The exact cause of PFO is unknown, but it is thought to be related to a combination of genetic and environmental factors. PFO is more common in

people who have a family history of the condition, and it is also more common in people who were born prematurely or with low birth weight.

## **Symptoms**

Most people with PFO do not have any symptoms. However, in some cases, PFO can cause symptoms, such as:

- Shortness of breath
- Chest pain
- Heart palpitations
- Fatigue
- Lightheadedness
- Stroke
- Paradoxical embolism
- Migraine headaches

## **Diagnosis**

PFO can be diagnosed with a variety of tests, including:

- Echocardiogram
- Transesophageal echocardiogram
- Bubble study
- Cardiac catheterization

## **Treatment**

The treatment for PFO depends on the severity of the condition and the patient's symptoms. In most cases, PFO does not require treatment. However, in some cases, PFO closure may be recommended to reduce the risk of complications. PFO closure can be performed with a variety of techniques, including:

- Transcatheter PFO closure
- Percutaneous PFO closure
- Surgical PFO closure

### **Long-Term Prognosis**

The long-term prognosis for PFO is generally good. Most people with PFO live long, healthy lives without any complications. However, in some cases, PFO can lead to serious complications, such as stroke, paradoxical embolism, and migraine headaches. Therefore, it is important to be aware of the potential risks and benefits of PFO closure.

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