

Dear Patient,

As a patient of UAB Hospital, your wellbeing is our top priority. If at any time you have questions or concerns regarding your health or your care, we are here for you.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) are investigating reports that devices used to heat and cool the blood during open-heart surgery have been linked to a potential contamination in the device's manufacturing process. This contamination could cause a rare, but treatable, infection of *Mycobacterium chimaera*, a species of bacteria known as nontuberculous mycobacterium (NTM). Accordingly, hospitals across the country are notifying patients who had open-heart cardiac surgery of this potential infection risk. You have been identified in our clinical records as a cardiac surgery patient who might be affected.

For patients who have had one of these surgeries, the chances of getting this infection are very low. CDC estimates the risk to be less than 1 percent. The bacteria are also very slow growing and can be difficult to diagnose. It is possible to develop symptoms years after surgery, so it is imperative to know the symptoms to look for and to discuss any symptoms or questions you may have with your primary care doctor. This infection cannot be spread person-to-person.

Symptoms of an NTM infection include:

- night sweats
- muscle aches
- weight loss
- fatigue
- unexplained fever

During the last six years, more than 4,500 patients had open-heart surgery at UAB Hospital, and we are aware of no patients who developed this infection. We are dedicated to the safety and comfort of our patients and have consistently met or exceeded recommended monitoring and maintenance on these devices for years. Prior to the CDC recommendation, we proactively refurbished our devices to address the concern.

We understand that you and your family may have additional questions or concerns about the information you have received. To help answer them, we have established a hotline at 205-801-7078. You may also obtain additional information and a letter to your primary care doctor explaining the concerns on the UAB Medicine website at www.UABMedicine.org/needtoknow.

Sincerely,

Loring Rue, MD
Chief Medical Officer