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## Pacemaker Insertion Discharge Instructions

You must carefully read the "Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer" below in order to understand and correctly use this information

### About this topic

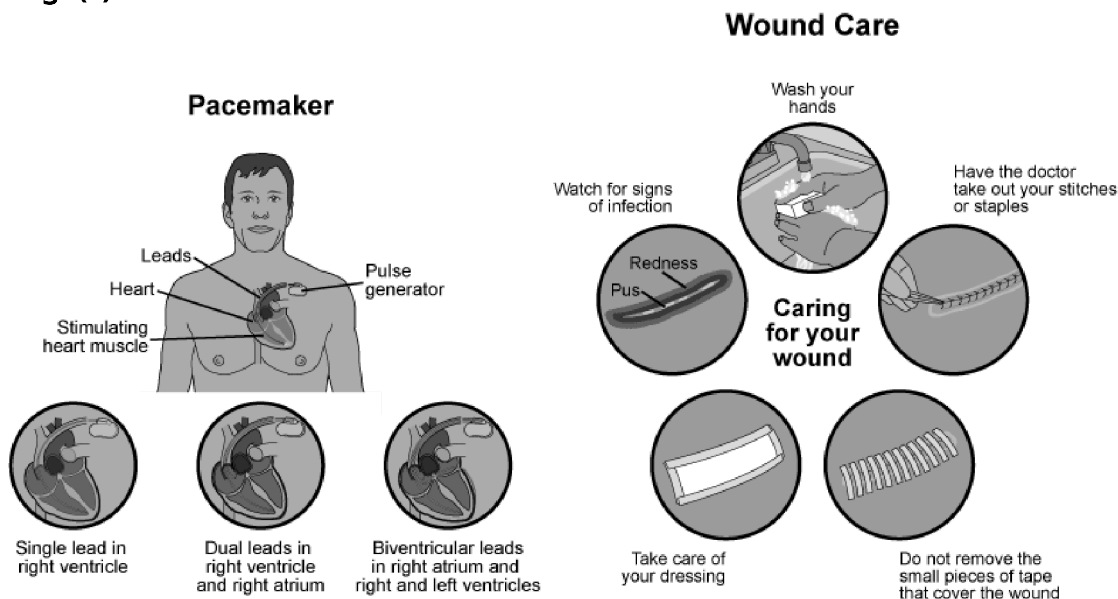
A pacemaker helps your heart to beat properly. A pacemaker is used when the heart does not beat normally. This is called an arrhythmia. Your heart may be beating too fast or too slow. Also, your heart may beat with an irregular rhythm. Any of these arrhythmias can affect your health if not treated right away.

The pacemaker is placed under the skin of your chest, just below your collarbone. Leads or wires are attached to the pacemaker. The leads will be hooked up to your heart to help control your heartbeat. Pacemakers work in many ways. Your doctor will decide which settings your pacemaker will need. Some send an electric pulse for each heartbeat. Others only send an electric pulse if the heart rate is too high or too low. A pacemaker is made up of two parts:

- Pulse generator – Houses the battery and a small computer that records the heartbeat
- Lead wires – Send the electric pulses from the generator to the heart

Your doctor may place leads in one part of the heart or in more than one place, based on the cause of your rhythm problem. Talk to your doctor about where they will place your leads.

### Image(s)



### What care is needed at home?

- Ask your doctor what you need to do when you go home. Make sure you ask questions if you do not understand what the doctor says. This way you will know what you need to do.

- Talk to your doctor about how to care for your cut site. Ask your doctor about:
  - When you should change your bandages
  - How to care for your cut sites
  - When you may take a bath or shower
  - If you need to limit your arm movement or wear a sling on the side where the device was placed
  - If you should learn to take your heart rate and blood pressure

To help others in case of an emergency:

- Wear a disease medical alert ID. This will let other people know that you have a pacemaker.
- Always carry your medical card. This card has information about your pacemaker. It will be able to let other people know what to do in an emergency.

Be careful around electrical devices or anything with magnets.

- Talk with your doctor about which electric or magnetic sources or equipment are safe to be around. Learn which ones you must avoid.
- Take extra care with cell phones and devices like smart watches. They may have a magnet that can affect your device. To be safe, keep these things away from your pacemaker. Carry them in a pocket or bag below your waist. Do not sleep with them on your bed.
- Most appliances in your home are safe for you to use.
- Check with your doctor about metal detectors that you walk through. You may be able to walk through them at a normal pace. Your pacemaker will likely set it off. Show your medical alert ID or card. You can also ask to be searched by hand.
- Stay at least 2 feet (0.6 meters) away from industrial welders, large motors, electrical generators, and equipment.
- Tell your other doctors about your pacemaker before having any other tests, like an MRI, or procedures.

### **What follow-up care is needed?**

Your doctor may ask you to make visits to the office to check on your progress. Be sure to keep these visits. Your doctor may order you to have an ECG (electrocardiogram) to check electrical pulses of your heart. Your doctor will also want to check:

- Your pacemaker. This is to make sure it is working properly.
- The pacemaker batteries. The batteries will need to be replaced before they start to run down. The batteries may last for years, based on how much your device is used. Leads or wires may also need to be replaced over time.

If you have stitches or staples, you will need to have them taken out. Your doctor will often want to do this in 1 to 2 weeks. Ask your doctor when the stitches or staples need to come out. If the doctor used skin glue, the glue will fall off on its own.

### **What drugs may be needed?**

The doctor may order drugs to prevent infection. Your doctor will tell you about the drugs you will need to take. Be sure to ask about them. Take all your drugs as ordered by your doctor.

### **Will physical activity be limited?**

You may have to limit your activity until the cut site is healed and the wires are securely in place. Talk to your doctor about:

- The right amount of activity for you. Ask when you may begin light sports and workouts or other tiring activities. Do not play full contact sports such as football. This could damage your pacemaker or may loosen the wires connected to your heart.
- How far you may raise your arm on the side of your body with the device. There will be a time when you are not allowed to reach over your head, out to the side, or do stretching on the side of your body with the device. You may be asked to wear a sling.
- How much weight you may lift.

### **What problems could happen?**

- Bleeding
- Damage to a blood vessel or nerve
- A collapsed lung
- Infection
- Device may not work the right way or becomes dislodged

### **When do I need to call the doctor?**

- Signs of wound infection. These include swelling, redness, warmth around the wound; too much pain when touched; yellowish, greenish, or bloody discharge; foul smell coming from the cut site; cut site opens up.
- The same signs you had before your pacemaker was placed
- Dizziness or shortness of breath. Call for emergency help right away.
- Chest pain. Call for emergency help right away.
- Hiccups that do not go away
- Fainting or passing out. Call for emergency help right away.
- You are not feeling better in 2 to 3 days or you are feeling worse

### **Helpful tips**

Be to keep your ID card with your pacemaker information in a safe place. It will include the manufacturer, serial number, and date the implant was put in. Also write down your pacemaker settings on this card. This information is helpful in case of an emergency.

## Teach Back: Helping You Understand

The Teach Back Method helps you understand the information we are giving you. After you talk with the staff, tell them in your own words what you learned. This helps to make sure the staff has described each thing clearly. It also helps to explain things that may have been confusing. Before going home, make sure you can do these:

- I can tell you about my procedure.
- I can tell you how to care for my cut site.
- I can tell you how I need to be careful around electrical devices and magnets with my pacemaker.
- I can tell you what signs will make me call for emergency help.

### Where can I learn more?

American Heart Association

<https://www.heart.org/en/health-topics/arrhythmia/prevention--treatment-of-arrhythmia/pacemaker>

NHS Choices

<http://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/PacemakerImplantation/Pages/Introduction.aspx>

UpToDate

<https://www.uptodate.com/contents/pacemakers-beyond-the-basics?view=print>

### Last Reviewed Date

2021-02-10

#### Consumer Information Use and Disclaimer:

This generalized information is a limited summary of diagnosis, treatment, and/or medication information. It is not meant to be comprehensive and should be used as a tool to help the user understand and/or assess potential diagnostic and treatment options. It does NOT include all information about conditions, treatments, medications, side effects, or risks that may apply to a specific patient. It is not intended to be medical advice or a substitute for the medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment of a health care provider based on the health care provider's examination and assessment of a patient's specific and unique circumstances. Patients must speak with a health care provider for complete information about their health, medical questions, and treatment options, including any risks or benefits regarding use of medications. This information does not endorse any treatments or medications as safe, effective, or approved for treating a specific patient. UpToDate, Inc. and its affiliates disclaim any warranty or liability relating to this information or the use thereof. The use of this information is governed by the Terms of Use, available at <https://www.wolterskluwer.com/en/solutions/lexicomp/about/eula>

