

Pacemaker

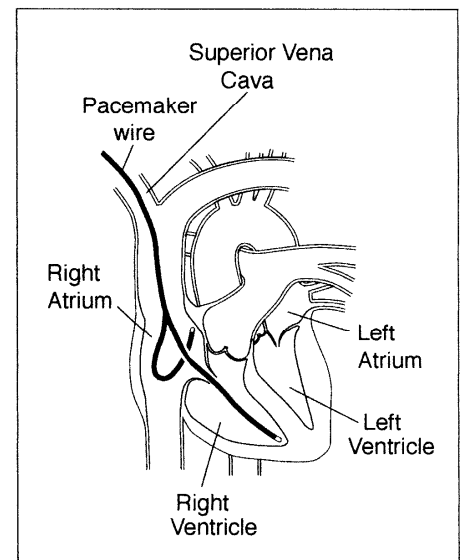
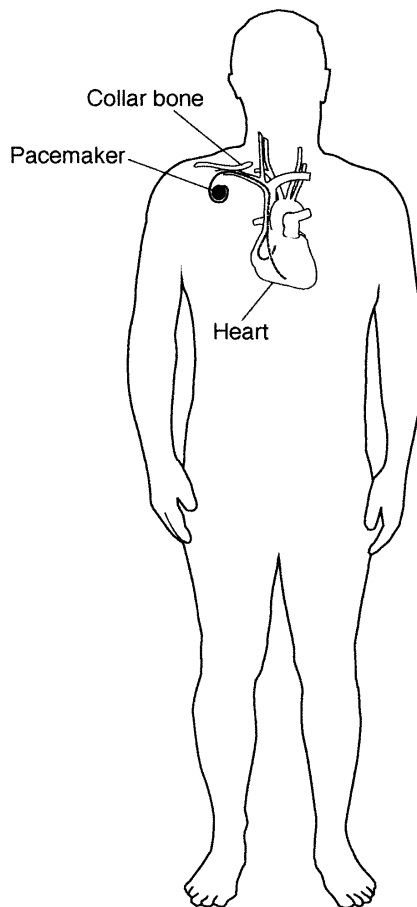
A pacemaker is a small device that helps control your heart rate by:

- Speeding up the heart rate when it is too slow
- Slowing down the heart rate when it is too fast
- Helping the rhythm of the heart beat regularly – this is if you have a pacemaker combined with a defibrillator, also called an ICD

A pacemaker is placed in the chest during surgery. Wires called leads are put into the heart muscle. The device with the battery is placed under your skin, below your shoulder.

When it is time for you to go home after surgery, an adult family member or friend needs to take you home. It is not safe for you to drive or leave alone. Have an adult stay with you at home for the first day after your surgery.

Arrive on time for your appointment. The surgery will take 1 to 2 hours.



To Prepare

- Talk to your doctor if you take blood thinners or have diabetes.
- Do not eat or drink anything, including water, after midnight before your surgery.
- Ask your doctor if you should take your medicines the morning of your surgery. If so, take with sips of water only.

During Surgery

- You will wear a hospital gown.
- An IV (intravenous) is put in a vein in your arm. Medicines to make you sleepy are given through the IV.
- Your neck or chest is cleaned. Men may have their chest hair clipped.
- The skin is numbed.
- The wire leads are put into a vein and guided into your heart using an x-ray.
- The wire leads are placed in your heart muscle.
- The other end of each wire is connected to the pacemaker.
- The pacemaker is placed in a small space under your skin.
- The incisions are closed with stitches under the skin that will dissolve. You may have narrow pieces of tape across the incisions called steri-strips. These hold the skin layer together during healing. These will loosen and fall off in about 10 days. If the tape is not used, special glue may be used to close the incisions.

After Surgery

In the Hospital

- An ice pack may be put on the sites.
- Your blood pressure, heart rate and incisions will be checked often.
- The head of your bed is raised. Do not lift your arm over your head on the same side where your pacemaker is placed.
- If you have discomfort, ask your nurse for pain medicine.
- You will have a chest x-ray to check your lungs and the pacemaker.
- Antibiotics are given in your IV to prevent infection.

A nurse will explain how your pacemaker works, answer any questions and explain pacemaker checks. You will not be able to feel your pacemaker working. You will be able to see and feel the outline of the pacemaker through your skin. Do not rub the pacemaker site.

At Home

- Schedule an appointment with your doctor for follow-up care.
- Talk to your doctor about activity limits. Your doctor may tell you to:
 - ▶ Limit the movement of your arm on the side of the pacemaker.
 - ▶ Not lift this arm above your head.
 - ▶ Not push, pull or lift anything heavier than 10 pounds or 4 kilograms.
- Ask your doctor when you can drive or go back to work.
- **Do not take a tub bath or shower for the first 6 days after surgery.** The incisions must stay clean and dry. You may take a sponge bath, but do not get the incisions wet.
 - ▶ You may shower on the **7th day**, but cover the incisions to keep them dry. Use plastic wrap or a plastic bag to cover the sites. Use tape to seal the edges of the plastic to your skin to keep the sites dry. After the shower, remove the plastic and tape. Gently pat the incisions dry with a clean towel.
 - ▶ **Days 8 to 10** after surgery, the sites must be covered with the plastic wrap and tape during a shower. Pat dry after the shower with a clean towel.
 - ▶ **Do not get the sites soaking wet for 14 days after surgery.** That means no tub baths, swimming or using a hot tub during that time.
- **Do not** use lotion or powder on the incisions.

Other Information

- Tell all of your health care providers, including your dentist, that you have a pacemaker.
- Carry the ID card your doctor gave you. This card has information about your pacemaker.
- Stay away from large magnets, such as those used for magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) tests.
- Avoid leaning into a car engine or doing welding.
- When turned on, do not place cell phones or iPods in shirt pockets over the pacemaker. Use cell phones on the opposite ear of where your

pacemaker is placed. If you strap an iPod to your arm, use the arm opposite the pacemaker.

- It is safe to use household appliances like microwave ovens, computers, toasters, hairdryers and heating pads.
- You can safely pass through security at airports. Be sure to have your pacemaker ID card with you.

Call your doctor right away if you have:

- A temperature over 100.5 degrees F or 38 degrees C
- Redness, swelling or drainage around your incisions
- Swelling of your feet or ankles
- Tenderness around your pacemaker that gets worse
- Stitches that come apart
- Chills
- A cough
- Weakness or feel tired
- Skin that is itchy, swollen or has a rash
- Sadness
- Signs you had before the pacemaker was implanted

Call 911 right away if:

- You feel faint or are too dizzy to stand.
- You have chest pain.
- Your bandages become soaked in blood.
- You have trouble breathing.

Talk to your doctor or nurse if you have any questions or concerns.

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