
Discharge Instructions for Pacemaker Implantation

You have had a procedure to insert a pacemaker. Once inside your body, this small electronic device helps keep your heart from beating too slowly. It can help you feel better and have more energy. As you recover, follow all of the instructions you are given. This includes those below.

Activity

- Follow the instructions you are given about limiting your activity.
- If you are fitted with an arm sling, keep your arm in the sling for as long as your health care provider tells you to. Most often, the sling will be removed the next day. But you may be told to sleep with it on for a period to prevent damage to the pacemaker while it's healing.
- Don't raise your arm on the incision side above shoulder level. Or stretch your arm behind your back for as long as directed by your provider. This gives the leads a chance to secure themselves inside your heart.
- Don't drive until your provider says it's okay. Have someone drive you home after the procedure.
- Ask your provider when you can expect to return to work. You may have limits until your provider says it's okay for unrestricted activity. This depends on the type of work you do.
- You can still exercise. It's good for your body and your heart. Talk with your provider about an exercise plan and the types of exercise to limit the risk of damaging your pacemaker.

Other precautions

- Follow your health care provider's directions carefully for wound care. If there is a dressing, ask whether you should remove it or keep it on until your next visit. Never put any creams, lotions, or products like peroxide on an incision unless your provider tells you to. Don't get the incision wet until your provider says it's okay.
- Check your incision for signs of infection. These include redness, swelling, drainage, and warmth. Do this for 7 days, or as advised by your provider.
- Before you have any treatment, tell all providers, including your dentist, that you have a pacemaker.
- Carry your pacemaker ID card with you at all times. The card has information about your pacemaker. You can show this card if your pacemaker sets off a metal detector. Also show it so you don't need to be screened with a handheld security wand.
- Be careful when using cell phones and other electronic devices. Keep them at least 6 inches away from your pacemaker. It's safest to hold all cell phones to the ear farthest from your pacemaker or use the speaker mode setting. Don't carry your phone or electronic device in your chest pocket, over the pacemaker. Experts advise

carrying your cell phone and other electronics in a pocket or bag below your waist. Most cell phones and electronic devices don't interfere with pacemakers. But some cell phones and electronic devices, such as smartwatches and headphones, use powerful magnets for wireless charging that may interfere with how your pacemaker works. The magnet used for charging or other magnet accessories can also interfere with how your pacemaker works. These devices should be kept at least 12 inches away from your pacemaker when wirelessly charging or stored. Follow any other instructions given to you by your health care provider and from the maker of your pacemaker.

- Stay away from strong magnets. An example is handheld security wands. Most pacemakers are now safe to use with MRI scanners. Ask your provider if you have such a pacemaker.
- Stay away from strong electrical fields. Examples are those made by radio transmitting towers, "ham" radios, and heavy-duty electrical equipment.
- Don't lean over the open hood of a running car. A running engine creates an electrical field. Most household and yard appliances will not cause any problems. If you use any large power tools, such as an industrial arc welder, talk with your provider.
- Follow any other instructions from your provider about other devices and procedures to stay away from.

Follow-up care

- See your cardiologist in the next 7 to 10 days. Call and make an appointment as soon as you get home.
- Make regular follow-up appointments with your health care provider. They will check the pacemaker to make sure it's working correctly.
- Plan on having periodic checkups with your provider to assess the battery life of your pacemaker. Depending on your device and how much your body uses the pacing functions of the pacemaker, you will need a new device generator implanted at some point. This is generally about every 10 years.
- Modern pacemakers have a built-in antenna that can send information, such as trouble alerts, over the internet to your provider. Ask your provider if your pacemaker is capable of remote monitoring.

When to call your doctor

Contact your health care provider right away if you have:

- Dizziness.
- Lack of energy.
- Twitching chest muscles.
- Rapid pulse or pounding heartbeat.
- Shortness of breath.
- Pain around your pacemaker.

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- A fever above 100.4° F (38° C) or higher, or as directed by your provider.
 - Other signs of infection, such as redness, swelling, drainage, or warmth at the incision site.
 - An incision that is not healing, or your incision separates or opens.
 - Hiccups that won't stop.
 - Redness, severe swelling, drainage, pain that gets worse, bleeding, or warmth at the incision site.
 - Your pacemaker generator feels loose or like it is wiggling in the pocket under the skin.

Call 911

Call 911 if you have:

- Chest pain.
- Trouble breathing.
- Fainting.