

Pacemaker Placement: Returning Home

Now that you have a pacemaker, which is helping your heart work better, you can do some things at home that should help you heal.

At first, expect to have some soreness, bruising, and mild swelling.

This should last a week or two.

You may be able to feel the pacemaker under your skin and see the outline of it in your chest.

And as the incision heals, you may feel a hard ridge along the incision.

But that should soften up in a few months.

Follow your doctor's instructions about limiting your activities.

You'll need to be careful while you heal so that the pacemaker and the leads in your heart will stay in place.

In general, avoid activities that strain your chest or upper arm muscles for at least 3 or 4 weeks—or for as long as your doctor says.

Those activities may include things like pushing a lawn mower or vacuum or going swimming.

Easy walking is a good activity.

You can lift light things, like laptops, dishes, or small books.

Just don't lift anything heavy, like grocery bags, kids, or a backpack.

Don't raise your arm above your shoulder on the side where your pacemaker is until your doctor says it's okay.

You can shower 24 to 48 hours after surgery.

Pat the incision dry.

Don't take a bath for the first 2 weeks or until your doctor says it's okay.

It may seem like a lot to do and remember, but don't worry.

Before you go home, you'll meet with the staff to go through your care plan.

The plan will include information about checkups, specialist care, any ongoing tests you may need, and who to call if there's a problem.

or suitability of this video for medical decision making. For all health related issues please contact your healthcare provider.



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This is a great time to ask questions.

Your medicines may change too.

Be sure you understand what they are and how to take them.

Your plan will also include having a heart-healthy lifestyle.

This includes eating healthy, being active, and not smoking.

This will give you the best chance for a longer, healthier life.

After going home, be sure that you follow any instructions about diet or activity.

You'll also get directions on how to care for the site where the pacemaker was put in.

Call your doctor if bright red blood soaks through the bandage or if you have loose stitches.

You'll also want to call your doctor if you have problems such as new or worse pain or bleeding.

And call if you are lightheaded or feel like you may faint.

Get emergency help right away if you pass out or have severe trouble breathing.

Watch for signs of infection.

Call if you have increased pain, swelling, warmth, redness, or any change in skin color.

And call if there's swelling in your upper arm on the side where your pacemaker was put in.

Call if there are streaks around the area or pus draining from the surgery site or if you have a fever.

You know yourself best, so talk to your doctor if you have any questions or concerns.

If you're a little nervous right now, that's okay.

Recovery and healing take time.