

If you have any questions or concerns, please ask your health care provider.

Understanding Your Pacemaker

You and your doctor have discussed the need for a permanent pacemaker. This information will help explain:

- What a pacemaker is.
- How it can help you.
- What follow-up care is needed.

While in the hospital, you can watch a pacemaker video on the Patient TV system. Ask your nurse for details.

The pacemaker is a device that can protect you against certain abnormal heart rhythms by constantly monitoring your heart. The pacemaker is able to detect a slow heart rhythm (bradycardia) and produce electrical impulses to increase your heart rate. If your heartbeat is too slow, there is not enough blood pumped to meet your body's needs. This may make you feel tired, weak, lightheaded or short of breath. A pacemaker restores the proper heart rate and rhythm.

Usually the pacemaker is implanted in the upper chest area just below the collarbone. The pacemaker is very small in size, with most weighing an ounce or less. The pacemaker consists of a pulse generator (a battery and an electrical circuit) and 1 to 3 wires (pacing leads). The pacing leads are threaded through a vein leading to the heart. The leads carry information about your heart rhythm back to the generator. They are also used to transmit needed electrical impulses to the heart. The leads and the generator are connected after proper placement is confirmed. The doctor will program the pacemaker to best fit your specific needs.

Pacemaker Placement

To prepare for the procedure:

- Do not eat or drink after midnight before the procedure.
- Remove eyeglasses, contact lenses, and all jewelry.

The pacemaker placement is done in the Electrophysiology Lab. You will receive sedation to make you comfortable during surgery. You then will go to a cardiac monitoring unit to recover. Your pacemaker will be checked the next day to see that it is working properly. Before your discharge, a chest X-ray will be done. You should make a wound check appointment for 1 week after surgery at the Device Clinic. The Device Clinic phone number is 312.695.1965.

After Your Discharge

At home you will need time to recover from the surgery. It is important for you to listen to your body and rest when you feel tired. Eat a proper diet. Follow up with your doctor for scheduled appointments.

Incision Care

- Do not shower or get the wound bandage wet until after the wound check appointment 7 to 10 days after surgery.
- When you have permission to shower, you may get the incision wet. Let the water, soap and shampoo trickle over the incision. Do not scrub the incision or the area around it. Pat the incision dry.
- Do not take a bath or submerge the incision in water for 6 weeks.
- Do not place any lotions, creams, or gel over the incision.
- Do not raise your affected arm over your head for the next 6 weeks. The height of your shoulder is the maximum level the arm can be raised. You may use your affected arm for everyday activities.
- Steri-Strips™, the clear strips of tape covering your wound, can be removed 1 week after your wound check appointment.
- Protect your incisions from the sun to avoid sunburn and decrease scarring.

Activity Guidelines

- Do not drive until you are given instructions about driving at your 1 week follow-up appointment. Most often driving is allowed after 1 to 6 weeks.
- Do not raise your affected arm over your head for the next 6 weeks. The height of your shoulder is the maximum level the arm can be raised. You may use your affected arm for everyday activities. A sling is not recommended for your recovery time.
- Exercise is encouraged. It is important to start slowly and progress gradually. Be sure to rest when you are tired. There are many benefits to a regular exercise program. Talk with your doctor to see what options are best for you.
- Do not use exercise machines with moving arms for the next 6 weeks.
- Avoid exercise or activity that could result in blunt blows to the pacemaker site, such as contact sports.
- Do not lift anything over 10 lbs. (such as groceries, laundry, children) until 6 weeks after surgery.
- You should avoid activities involving stretching and/or reaching movements with your affected arm (such as golf or tennis) for 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Do not go swimming or use whirlpools for 6 weeks until the incision is completely healed to decrease the risk of infections.
- Avoid dental work for 3 months after the implant.

When to Call the Doctor

Notify your surgeon if you develop any of these signs of infection:

- Fever greater than 100° F.
- Redness, swelling or tenderness at the incision site.
- Drainage from the incision site

Call 911 or your local emergency number if you have:

- Chest pain
- Palpitations
- Fainting or passing out

Once transferred to an emergency department, notify us at the Device Clinic at 312.695.1926.

Follow-up Care and Appointments

After your pacemaker is implanted, you will be followed closely by the Device Clinic to assure that it is working properly. The pacemaker may be re-programmed to fit your needs. Part of your follow-up involves checking the battery life of your device.

Appointments

It is very important that you keep your appointments. The Device Clinic is located at:

675 North Saint Clair Street

19th Floor, Suite 100

Phone 312.695.1926

1 week after your surgery

You will need to come back to the Device Clinic for a wound check. Your wound check appointment is:

After this visit, you will be seen again in **3 months**. Then you will begin remote home monitoring. A remote transmission will be completed every 3 months for the next year. You will then return to the Device Clinic **once a year for an annual exam**.

Living with Your Pacemaker

Magnets and Electrical Devices

Keep your device at least 6 inches away from all things magnetic. Normal use of properly operating household appliances should not damage your pacemaker. Microwave ovens and cell phones are safe to use. However, do not carry your cell phone in your shirt pocket over your device. When talking on the cell phone, hold it in the ear on the opposite side of your device.

Using electric arc welders or working on automobile ignition systems also will not damage your pacemaker. But, they can interfere with the pacemaker function. If you are using electrical equipment or working around running motors and you become lightheaded or feel palpitations, turn the equipment off or walk away from it. Normal pacemaker function should resume.

You may have X-rays and CT exams. You cannot have an MRI test. If you need an MRI, please contact the Device clinic for the clearance process. Dental equipment is safe with a few exceptions. Notify your dentist about your pacemaker before any procedure is performed.

Metal detectors at the airport or at Federal buildings will not hurt your device, but they may alarm when you pass through them. Hand held wands should be avoided. You will need to present your device ID card, let security know you have an implanted device, and security will do a hand pat-down.

Your Device

You have been implanted with a _____.

The company's phone number is _____.

You should receive a temporary ID card from your device company. You will receive a permanent ID card in the mail 3 to 4 weeks after your procedure. ***Carry this ID card with you at all times.***

If you have any specific questions about your device, please contact the device company.

It is important to notify all of your doctors that you have a pacemaker. If there are any questions concerning your pacemaker and specific tests you need, we can provide you with further information.

For any questions or concerns about your pacemaker, feel free to call the ***Device Clinic nurse at 312.695.1926.***

Northwestern Medicine – Health Information Resources

For more information, contact Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Alberto Culver Health Learning Center (HLC) at hlc@nm.org, or by calling 312.926.5465. You may also visit the HLC on the 3rd floor, Galter Pavilion at 251 E. Huron St., Chicago, IL. Health information professionals can help you find the information you need and provide you with personal support at no charge.

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at nm.org.

Para asistencia en español, por favor llamar al Departamento de Representantes para Pacientes al 312.926.3112.

The entities that come together as Northwestern Medicine are committed to representing the communities we serve, fostering a culture of inclusion, delivering culturally competent care, providing access to treatment and programs in a nondiscriminatory manner and eliminating healthcare disparities. For questions, please call either Northwestern Memorial Hospital's Patient Representatives Department at 312.926.3112, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363 or the Northwestern Medical Group Patient Representatives Department at 312.695.1100, TDD/TTY 312.926.6363.

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