



Patient & Family Guide
2018

Living With Your Pacemaker

Aussi disponible en français : *Vivre avec un
stimulateur cardiaque (pacemaker)* (FF85-1944)



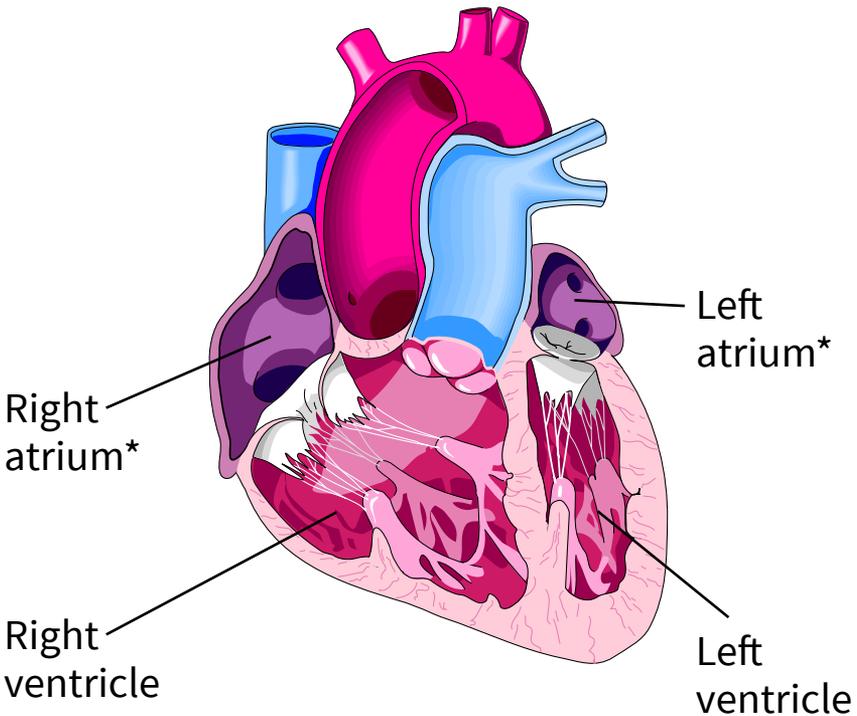
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Living With Your Pacemaker

Your doctor has recommended a pacemaker for you. This booklet will help you learn about this device.

How your heart beats

The heart has an electrical system that controls how fast your heart beats. A normal heartbeat starts from the top part of your heart (atria*) and spreads to the bottom part of your heart (ventricles). This lets the heart fill with blood. The blood is then sent out to your body.



*Atria is the plural form of the word atrium.

Symptoms of problems with your heartbeat

Problems with your heartbeat may cause various symptoms. It depends on how your circulation (movement of blood through your body) is affected.

The most common symptoms are:

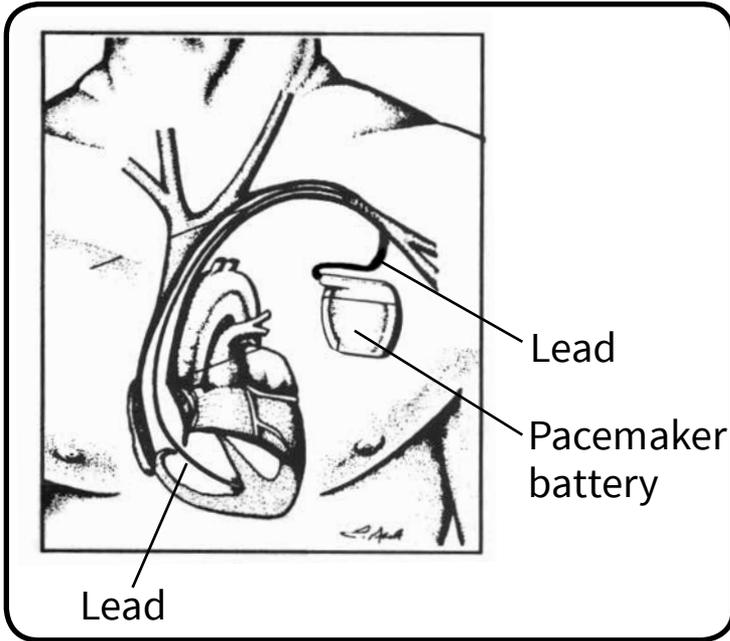
- › fainting
- › feeling light-headed
- › dizziness

Other symptoms may be:

- › feeling tired
- › shortness of breath
- › chest pain
- › swelling of the feet or ankles

What is a pacemaker?

A pacemaker is used to prevent the heart from beating too slowly. It can also be used to increase your heart rate to suit your activity.



A thin, insulated wire called a lead (“leed”) is placed in a vein and passed into your heart. The lead is attached to the pacemaker generator.

Your pacemaker will only deliver impulses when needed. A battery is sealed inside the device.

How long your pacemaker lasts will depend on how often the battery is used. **The pacemaker battery will usually last 7-10 years. When the battery runs low, you will need a new device.**

The lead may not need to be changed when the device is replaced.

This pamphlet is just a guide. If you have questions, please talk to your health care provider. We are here to help you.

Getting ready

- Please use 2% Chlorhexidine skin wipes the night before and morning of your surgery.
- Do not eat or drink after midnight on the day the device will be inserted (put in). You may be able to have a light breakfast if your procedure is planned for the afternoon.
- You will be asked to sign a consent form.
- A nurse may use clippers to get rid of hair on your chest if needed.

What will happen during my procedure?

- Your pacemaker may be inserted in the Operating Room (OR) or in the Cardiac Cath Lab.
- A doctor and anesthesiologist (doctor who will give you medication to make you sleepy) will see you before your procedure.
- The doctor will make a small incision (cut) in your upper chest so that they can insert the lead into a vein going into your heart.
- The device will also be placed under your skin through this incision. The device may look like a small lump under your skin. You will not be able to see this when dressed.
- The device will be tested during the procedure to make sure it is working well. You will not feel this testing.

After surgery

- You will have an electrocardiogram (ECG) and chest X-ray.
- A nurse will check your bandage.
- You will be able to eat and drink as usual.
- You may have swelling and tenderness around the incision (cut) for a few days. Ask for pain medication, if needed.

Followup

- Plans will be made for you to visit the Pacemaker Clinic for followup.
- Your pacemaker will be checked twice a year in the Clinic or through a home monitoring device.
- In the Clinic, a special machine called a programmer will check your pacemaker. This does not hurt. Something that looks like a large bar of soap is placed on your chest. This is attached to a computer so we can see how your pacemaker is working.

At home

Care of your incision

- Take the first dressing off 2-4 days after your procedure.
- Leave the Steri-Strips™ (tape) underneath the dressing on your skin. These will fall off in 7-10 days.
- Do not shower until the incision (cut) is well healed.
- You may have discomfort at the incision site. Acetaminophen (e.g. Tylenol®) may help. Ask your nurse or pharmacist if you need help.

We recommend that you follow up with your family health care practitioner 2-4 days after your procedure. If you have questions after your procedure, please call your family health care practitioner.

Check your incision every day for signs of infection until it's healed. Call your doctor right away if you have any of these symptoms of infection:

- › fever over 38 ° C/100 ° F
- › drainage from the incision
- › redness
- › swelling
- › more soreness than usual

Electrical equipment

- Household appliances, including microwaves, are safe to use.
- Keep all electrical appliances and power tools properly grounded and in good repair. This includes gardening tools, and workshop and office equipment.
- Tell your dentist and/or your other health care providers that you have a pacemaker.
- Do not lean over a running engine. Some equipment or large motors may interfere with the way the device works. This may make you feel dizzy or faint. The device will work normally when you move away from the equipment.
- You may use a smartphone if you take some safety steps. Keep your smartphone at least 6 inches away from your pacemaker. Do not carry your smartphone in a pocket over your pacemaker.
- Walk normally through theft detectors at entrances to stores and airport screening detectors. Your device may set off the alarm, but it will keep working normally. Show your ID card for your device and **ask for a pat down search but ask that they do not use a hand-held sensor.**

Identity (ID) card and MedicAlert®

You will be given a temporary ID card before you leave the hospital. Your type of pacemaker and when you got it will be on the card. After about a month, the company that made the pacemaker will mail you a permanent ID card. This information will be helpful if you have to see a doctor who does not know you.

Ask how to apply for a MedicAlert® bracelet before you leave the hospital. Wear a MedicAlert® bracelet at all times.



Activities

For the next 6-8 weeks:

- Do not make any sudden jerky movements that will cause your arm on the same side as your pacemaker to pull away from your body (like when the leash pulls on your arm while walking the dog).
- Do not apply direct pressure over your pacemaker. Do not press on the skin over your pacemaker.
- Do not reach your arm on the same side as the pacemaker over your head.
- Do not lift anything heavier than 5-10 pounds.

Before you leave the hospital, your nurse and doctor will talk with you about any other limits to your activity.

**What are your questions?
Please ask. We are here to help you.**

This pamphlet is only an introduction to your pacemaker. We will help you learn more about your device before you go home. Remember, your pacemaker will help you to live as full a life as possible.

Notes:

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <http://library.nshealth.ca/PatientGuides>
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.