

Patient Information Leaflet

## Permanent Pacemakers

Produced by: Cardiology



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**If you require this leaflet in another language, large print or another format, please contact the Quality Team, telephone 01983 534850, who will advise you.**

### **What is a Pacemaker?**

A pacemaker is a small, metal, battery-powered device that helps maintain or regulate your heart rate. It works by producing an electrical impulse, which stimulates the heart to beat.

### **Why do I need a Pacemaker?**

Your doctor has recommended you have a pacemaker fitted because there are signs your heart is beating either too fast or too slowly. Most pacemakers are designed to correct slow heart rates. If you have an abnormally slow heart rate you may have been experiencing weakness, tiredness, dizziness or even loss of consciousness. A pacemaker can greatly help these symptoms.

Your cardiologist will discuss which type of pacemaker most suits your particular condition.

### **Risks and side effects**

Complications associated with a pacemaker insertion are rare. However, it is important that you are aware of the following risks of this procedure.

- There is a small risk of getting an infection at the site where the pacemaker is fitted. If you notice redness, swelling or a discharge, or if you develop a fever, tell your doctor or hospital immediately.
- Your doctor will also advise you not to do any vigorous exercise for 2 or 3 weeks after the procedure. This is to reduce the possibility of the pacemaker leads moving out of position during the healing period.
- There is also a small risk of air leaking from the lungs to the chest (pneumothorax) during the procedure. This may need draining but usually resolves spontaneously. The doctor will check this is clear on your chest x-rays before you leave hospital.

### **About the procedure**

The pacemaker will be put in under a local anaesthetic. This means that although you will be awake whilst it is happening, the area will be numbed and you will not feel any pain. You may also be given a medication to help you relax.

After the area has been cleaned and the local anaesthetic has started working, a small cut will be made on the side (usually on the left) of your chest, just under your collar bone. The doctor will then insert the pacemaker lead into your vein and use X-ray imaging to guide the lead to the correct part of your heart. The lead will then be attached to the pacemaker which fits into a small "pocket" between your skin and your chest muscle. This "pocket" will be stitched up to secure the pacemaker. The procedure usually takes just over an hour but people are all different and it can sometimes take a bit longer.

## **After the procedure**

You will be taken back to the ward where you will be closely monitored by the nurses. You may also have a chest X-ray.

Discomfort around the implant site is common and to be expected. The nurses can give you pain relief to control the discomfort and you may need to continue this at home.

You will remain in hospital overnight. It is important that you do not lift the arm on the pacemaker side above your head for 24 hours.

## **At home**

You will usually be allowed home the following day after another check of your new pacemaker. Your stitches will dissolve naturally but please avoid getting the area wet until the after the dressing is removed (i.e. Wash or bathe but not shower). You can remove the dressing 7 days after the procedure. It will usually be loose by this time. Avoid straining the wound area and don't lift (or Hoover) for a couple of weeks.

You must not drive for one week following pacemaker implantation so **must** arrange for someone to pick you up from the hospital. You must also inform the DVLA and insurance company that you now have a pacemaker.

Most pacemakers are resistant to outside interference. However some metal detector security devices (such as in airports or shops) may detect the pacemaker and set off alarms. You should tell the security staff that you have a pacemaker.

If you use a mobile or cordless phone it is best to use it on the opposite side to your pacemaker and avoid putting it in a pocket over your pacemaker. It could, very rarely, cause disruption to the signal from the pacemaker.

MIG welding in close proximity can also cause disruption to the pacemaker signal and should be avoided.

## **Follow up**

You will be given a pacemaker registration card with details of your particular pacemaker. This may be given to you before you leave the hospital or posted to your home address. This card must be **carried with you at all times** and brought to all of your pacemaker appointments.

Your first pacemaker appointment will take place approximately 6 weeks after you are discharged and will be sent to you by post. Further pacemaker check ups will take place every 6 to 12 months.

**Please use this space for any notes**

Valuables should not be brought into the hospital. If patients have to bring in valuable items they should ask a nurse to store them safely and request a receipt for the items. You may not be able to have the valuable items returned if the time of discharge from hospital is out of hours.

We are sorry but the Trust cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to items not given for safe keeping.

You can get further information on all sorts of health issues online at: <http://www.nhs.uk/>

For Health advice and out of hours GP service please call the NHS 111 service on: 111

### **We Value Your Views On Our Service**

If you wish to comment on the care which you, your relative or friend has received, we will be pleased to hear from you. Please speak to the person in charge of the ward, clinic or service in the first instance or ask them to contact the Quality Team. If you wish to contact them directly, telephone on 534850.

Alternatively you may prefer to write to:

Chief Executive  
Isle Of Wight NHS Trust  
St Mary's Hospital  
Newport  
Isle of Wight  
PO30 5TG

You can also share any concerns you have about our services with the Care Quality Commission (CQC) on 03000 61 61 61 or at [enquiries@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cqc.org.uk)

All NHS sites are no smoking areas.

If you would like help and advice to stop smoking please call: Freephone 0800 169 0 169 to talk to the NHS Smoking Helpline.

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