

Implanting a Permanent Pacemaker – What to Expect



Interior Health
Every person matters

Patient Information

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Why Do I Need a Pacemaker?

Your heart has an electrical system made up of specialized cells. This system signals your heart to contract or squeeze to circulate blood and oxygen to your body.

Sometimes this system can be damaged by aging or heart disease which can result in:

- A slower heart beat than normal (bradycardia)
- Long pauses between beats (heart block)
- Switching between slow and fast heart beats

These may make you feel tired, dizzy and short of breath. It may also cause fainting spells. Your doctor has determined you need an artificial pacemaker to keep your heart beating properly so your body can receive oxygen-rich blood.

Preparing for a Pacemaker Implant

If you are in hospital before this procedure, your health care team will help you prepare. The night and morning before, follow instructions for eating and drinking. Your medications may require adjustment prior to surgery, it is important to take them as directed. If you are at home, you will be scheduled for a Pre-Surgical Screening appointment. You will be given instructions on eating and drinking, medications and skin preparation. It is important to bring a list of your current medications and your BC Care Card to all appointments including the day of the procedure.

What is a Pacemaker?

A pacemaker is a small electronic device that helps your heart keep beating at the right pace.

Inserting the pacemaker into your body is called implantation.

This device has two parts:

1. A pacemaker which is a small metal computer with a lithium battery that produces the electrical impulse.
2. The pacing leads (you may have 1 or 2) are insulated wires that carry the tiny electrical impulse from the pacemaker to the heart to regulate your heart rate.

A pacemaker battery usually lasts 6 to 10 years depending on how much it is used.

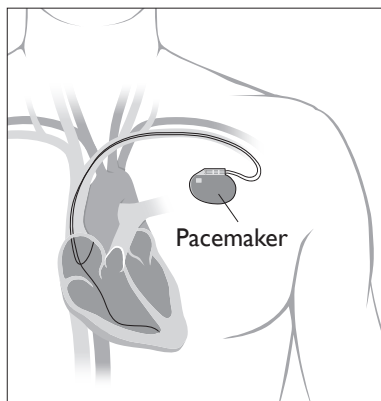


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Healthlink BC Call 8-1-1 www.healthlinkbc.ca	Nurse	24 hours a day	Daily	<i>Call 8-1-1 to speak with a nurse, ask a dietitian about nutrition, or a pharmacist about your medication.</i>
	Dietitian	9 am – 5 pm	Mon – Fri	
	Pharmacist	5 pm – 9 am	Daily	
	Hearing Impaired	Call 7-1-1		

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During the Procedure



Medication is usually given to make you sleepy and comfortable. A small incision will be made in the upper chest below the collarbone. One or two leads (thin insulated wires) will be guided through a vein, using x-ray into the heart. The leads are connected to pacemaker and it is tested to ensure it is working properly. The pacemaker will then be inserted beneath your skin. This is a surgical procedure that takes approximately 90 minutes.

After the Procedure

After a pacemaker implant you will go to the recovery room. Your heart will be monitored to make sure the pacemaker is working well. You may feel some discomfort around the incision and your shoulder may be sore. You will be tired. It is important to let your nurse know if you are experiencing pain.



Discharge Home and Follow Up

Your stay in hospital depends on your medical needs and your condition. You may stay in the hospital from several hours up to several days after the procedure. You will be sent home with instructions on incision care, when to take medications and follow up appointments. Take medications as directed. Your pacemaker will require routine monitoring every 6 to 12 months using a combination of Cardiac Device Clinic visits and home monitoring. At your first visit, you will receive information on living with your pacemaker including your specific type and when to seek help. Clinic staff will also review your follow up schedule and determine if home monitoring is an option for you.