

Pacemaker Implantation Procedure Pre and Post **Instructions**

A pacemaker is a small electronic device that helps the heart to beat at a proper rate. It keeps track of your normal heart beat, and can sense when it becomes too slow. When that happens, the pacemaker generates a small electrical impulse, very similar to the heart's natural impulse. This keeps your heart beating at a normal pace.

Your pacemaker has two main parts: the generator and the lead(s). The generator is a small, flat, lightweight metal case that contains a tiny computer and battery. This is the part that generates the electrical impulses. The leads are wires covered by soft, flexible plastic. Working together to regulate your heart, they monitor how well the heart is beating and will send electrical impulses from the generator to the heart when it senses it is necessary.

Preparation

Prior to your procedure, we may request tests, such as an electrocardiogram (ECG) and blood tests. We will review all medications you are taking, and give you any special instructions concerning them. You'll be told where and when to report for your pacemaker (unless you're in the hospital) and what to do before you arrive. Generally, you'll be asked not to eat or drink anything after midnight the evening before your procedure (except sips of water to swallow your pills).

Just before your procedure, we will discuss your pacemaker insertion - its purpose, benefits, and potential risks. The insertion of a pacemaker is a common, low-risk surgical procedure with a very small risk of complications. These might include puncture of the heart or lung tissue, damage to the vein, infection, bleeding, and/or bruising. Although the rate of complications is very low, you'll be asked to sign a routine consent form. This is a good time to ask questions or talk about any concerns you may have.

Procedure

Before your procedure, an intravenous line (IV) will be inserted in your arm to administer any medications. The area where the pacemaker will be inserted will be washed with an antiseptic soap and shaved. You will be taken to a special procedure room where you'll be covered with sterile drapes. You'll be awake through the procedure, but will be given a sedative to help you relax and make you drowsy.

The procedure room personnel, who have been trained specifically in the electrical activity of the heart, will be wearing surgical hats and masks to assure that the environment is kept as clean as possible. Your ECG, heart rate, blood pressure, and oxygen level will be monitored throughout the procedure.

A local anesthetic will be injected under the skin to numb the site where the pacemaker will be implanted in the upper part of the chest. Then the electrophysiologist will make a small incision, and form a "pocket" under the skin to hold the generator. The leads will be inserted into a vein under the collarbone and guided into your heart using an x-ray monitor, and tested periodically to determine their best positioning. After the leads are in place, they will be attached to the generator, which will then be gently placed into the skin "pocket". Then the incision will be closed with dissolvable stitches and a small bandage applied.

During the procedure you may feel some pushing and tugging on your skin. However, you should feel very little, if any, discomfort overall. The procedure usually lasts approximately one and one-half hours.

Recovery

After the procedure, you'll be taken to a hospital room or a recovery area. You'll be kept overnight in the hospital so your heart can be monitored to make sure your pacemaker is functioning well. You'll be asked to limit the use of your arm on the side the pacemaker was inserted to give the leads an opportunity to heal to your heart tissue.

You may feel some discomfort in the incision area when the local anesthetic wears off. If so, the staff will give you some medication to make you more comfortable. Be sure to tell your nurse if you experience any unusual symptoms such as hiccups, dizziness, or chest pain. Before you leave the hospital, you'll be given detailed instructions about caring for your incision site. You'll also be told what signs and symptoms to report, and you'll be given a follow-up plan. You should arrange ahead of time for someone to drive you home.

Health Maintenance

Your pacemaker will help make sure your heartbeat remains strong and regular, but you also play an important role in staying healthy. Be sure you understand your follow-up plan and keep all appointments for exams and follow-up tests. Follow your instructions, don't hesitate to talk about your concerns, and immediately report any new symptoms.

Discharge Instructions

Taking Care of your wound:

- Remove only the large dressing over the pacemaker 48 hours after surgery if dressing was not removed in the hospital.
- DO NOT remove Steri strips, the surgical tape that is taped directly on your skin over the incision. We will remove them at your 2 week follow-up appointment. You may have staples on your incision, these will be removed at your 2 week follow-up appointment.
- Shower as usual 48 hours after implantation.
- Don't scrub the incision area, just wash gently with soap, rinse and pat dry with a clean towel (do not rub).
- Do not submerge your wound in a bathtub, swimming pool or Jacuzzi for 6 weeks.
- Some discomfort such as mild redness, itching and swelling may occur. These symptoms are part of the normal healing process. Don't scratch the wound if it starts to itch.
- Avoid tight clothing over incision/pocket site.
- Protect your incision area from excessive sunlight. Do NOT apply any type of lotion or cream to the site.

Signs of Infection/Problem:

- Significant redness, heat, swelling or severe pain.
- Fever of 100 degrees or higher.
- White, yellow, or greenish discharge from the wound or significant bleeding.
- Opening of the wound.
- Increasing discomfort related to the wound.

DO:

- Continue to take medications unless told otherwise at discharge.
- Exercise per physician's orders.
- Put your temporary pacemaker card in your wallet (you will receive a permanent card in about 6 weeks in the mail). Take home your pacemaker booklet and read at home.
- Call if you experience any dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting or any questions related to your pacemaker

DON'T:

- Lift, push or pull over 10lbs. OR raise your arm (on pacemaker side) above shoulder level for 6 weeks (this includes golfing and tennis).
- Don't have an MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) unless it has been 6 weeks after implant and you have a known MRI compatible device and an order has been signed by your EP doctor.
- Don't put a cell phone in your shirt pocket over your pacemaker

Other:

Magnets can affect your pacemaker. Please read enclosed materials and discuss with your physician if necessary.

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www.mountainheartcares.com

Information from: www.aacheart.com