

Following a Pacemaker Implant

You have just had a pacemaker inserted or 'implanted'. This sheet explains how to care for yourself at home.

Caring for yourself at home

Rest for the first 24 hours.

You can usually return to your regular activities as you are able.

For the first 2 days:

- **Do not** use the arm on the same side as your pacemaker to reach above your shoulder or behind your back.
- **Do not** guard your arm to the point that the shoulder joint is completely immobile.

For the first 6 weeks:

- **Do not** do any activities where you are repeatedly pushing and pulling, swinging, or raising the arm on the same side as your pacemaker. Examples include swimming, raking, sweeping, or vacuuming, high reaching, or playing ball, tennis, or golf. Ask your doctor if you are not sure if you can do an activity.
- **Do not** lift anything heavy. This means do not lift anything more than 5 kilograms or 10 pounds (a small suitcase, a bag of groceries).

These limitations are to keep the tiny wires connecting the pacemaker to your heart from being dislodged.

Caring for your wound

Leave the bandage on for 2 days. **Do not** get the bandage wet.

When you remove the bandage, you will see some thin bandage strips over the incision. Leave these strips in place. Let them fall off on their own. It can take up to 2 weeks for the strips to fall off.

Do not get your incision wet for 5 days.

You can shower after 5 days.

- When you shower, do not use soap on the wound.
- Gently pat the wound dry. Do not rub it.
- Do not put any creams or ointments on the incision.
- Your stitches should dissolve on their own.

Managing pain

The area where the pacemaker was inserted is usually most painful the day after the procedure but sometimes up to 3 days after.

If you are having pain, take **plain acetaminophen** (such as Tylenol or store brand). You can take 1 to 2 tablets, every 4 to 6 hours. **Never** take more than 4000mg in any 24 hour period (no more than 12 tablets).

Don't wait until the pain is really bad before you take any medicine. You recover faster when you keep your pain under control.

Do not take ibuprofen (such as Motrin, Advil, or a store brand) for pain unless your doctor has said you can.

- adapted with permission from 'Care Following the Insertion of a Heart Device' (#262897) January, 2013 by Fraser Health.

Medications

Take your medications as directed.

Do not stop or change your medications without talking with your family doctor.

If you are taking a blood thinner (called anti-coagulant) such as warfarin (Coumadin):

- start taking it on this date: _____
- ask your family doctor when you must get your blood tested.

Driving

For your own safety and the safety of others, you must follow the mandatory driving restrictions in the British Columbia Motor Vehicle Act.

The Act says that after a pacemaker implant:

- You are **not allowed to drive a private vehicle** (class 5) **for 1 week** after the procedure.
- You are **not allowed to drive a commercial vehicle** (class 1 to 4) **for 1 month** after the procedure.

Talk to your heart doctor if you have questions about driving, especially if it relates to your work.

When to see your doctor(s)

Make an appointment to see your family doctor one (1) week after procedure.

You will be notified for a follow-up appointment in 6-8 weeks at a pacemaker clinic.

Clinic: _____

Phone #: _____

OR

Specific physician: _____

Phone #: _____

If you have not heard from them within 3 weeks, please call them at the number provided above.

When to get help

Call 9-1-1 if you notice any of the following:

- trouble breathing, or cannot catch your breath
- pain in your chest and/or shoulder
- hiccups that do not go away
- blood soaking through your bandage

Do not drive yourself to the hospital.

Contact your family doctor right away if you notice:

- any redness, swelling, or coloured liquid coming from your incision
- a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F)
- new bruising or redness around the incision
- pain that gets worse or does not improve with pain medicine
- any stitches in your incision after 3 to 4 weeks

Always carry your pacemaker identification card with you. You should get a permanent card in the mail in about 2 to 3 months. If you do not get this card in the mail, let the staff in the pacemaker clinic know you did not get it.

It's good to ask

If you have any questions or concerns when you get home, contact:

- Your family doctor
- Call HealthLinkBC - 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online to www.HealthLinkBC.ca

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This material has been reviewed and approved by patients, families and staff.

