



A lifetime of specialist care

Royal Brompton & Harefield **NHS**
NHS Foundation Trust

Royal Brompton Hospital

Living with your pacemaker





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This leaflet is a general guide on living with and adapting to life with a pacemaker. It does not replace the information and individual advice we give you in person. Please ask if you have any questions or need further information.

What is a pacemaker?

A pacemaker is used to regulate your heartbeat and can help if your heart beats too slowly.

Leads coming from the pacemaker are placed in different parts of the heart. They cause the heart to beat when an electrical impulse is sent through them.

Single chamber pacemakers have one lead, dual chamber pacemakers have two and biventricular pacemakers (which can help patients with heart failure) have three leads. The type of pacemaker you have will depend on your heart condition. We will explain which one you have and why.

What should I expect when I leave hospital?

Before you leave the hospital:

- We will give you an X-ray to check that the leads from your pacemaker are fitted correctly.
- We will check that the device is working properly.
- We will prescribe a course of antibiotics to help reduce the risk of infection.

- We will make a follow-up appointment for you and give you a pacemaker identification card.

Please remember that pacemakers can be affected by some procedures. It is important to keep your ID card with you at all times and to show it to medical and dental staff before you have any treatment.



How do I take care of my wound when I leave hospital?

The first few days after your operation

Please keep the dressing in place over the wound for the first three days. You can remove the dressing after three days, but keep the wound dry until it has healed. This will reduce the risk of infection.

Two to four weeks after your operation

Please avoid putting strain on your wound. This means that you should not take part in any activity that involves lifting your elbow above shoulder level. You will need to avoid lifting any heavy objects and taking part in sports.

Stitches

For most patients we use dissolvable stitches or special glue that fades away over

time. Sometimes we have to use removable stitches. These have to be removed by your GP five days after your operation. Please make an appointment with your GP to arrange this. We will give you a letter to show to your GP.

You should immediately contact the pacemaker clinic on **020 7351 8647** if you experience any of the following:

- a fever or chills
- the wound becomes red, sore or swollen
- there is a discharge

These may indicate an infection, but this can usually be treated with a course of antibiotics.

Will I have follow-up appointments?

You will need to come to the hospital regularly to have your pacemaker checked by a cardiac physiologist – a

healthcare professional trained to carry out diagnostic and analytical procedures for heart patients.

These appointments are important to make sure that your device is programmed so that the battery lasts as long as possible. Please remember to bring your device identity card with you so we can make sure the technical data it contains is correct.

You will usually have follow-up appointments at six weeks, six months and one year after your operation.

If there are no complications after this time, you will only have yearly follow-ups until the battery starts to wear down. We may invite you for more frequent follow-up appointments.

If the physiologist has any concerns about your pacemaker or your health, he or she can refer you to a doctor for further checks.

Can I bring someone with me to my appointment?

You are welcome to bring a friend or relative with you to the appointment.

What will happen at my appointment?


The cardiac physiologist will take you from the waiting area to one of the pacing rooms for your check-up.

We may ask you to undo your shirt or blouse buttons and to lie on the couch. (Women can keep their bras on.)

We will place electrodes (small sticky patches) on your arms and legs or chest to test the

electrical activity of your heart with an ECG (electrocardiogram).

We then put a special device over your pacemaker to carry out certain tests. These may include temporarily reducing and increasing the rate of the device. We will explain what we are about to do and what you can expect before carrying out any tests.



Modern pacemakers are capable of storing data. If you have had any problems with the device, please tell the cardiac physiologist during the appointment.

The appointment will usually take around 25 minutes. We will ask you to dress and tell you when your next appointment should be. Please go to the pacing clinic reception to make the appointment.

What do I do if I feel generally unwell?

You should always contact your GP first if you have a general medical problem. If your GP feels the problem is related to your heart condition, he or she can always refer you to us.

Do I need to tell healthcare staff that I have a pacemaker?

If you are seeing a doctor, dentist or any other healthcare professional, please remember to tell them that you have a pacemaker and show them your ID card. This will allow them to check that any planned treatment will not interfere with your pacemaker.

You may consider wearing a MedicAlert bracelet to let healthcare staff know that you have a pacemaker. You can find more information online at www.medicalert.co.uk or by calling **020 7833 3034**.

Can I exercise with a pacemaker?

Exercise should not affect your pacemaker. Please discuss your individual situation with your cardiologist to find out if and when you can start exercising.

There is a small risk of damage to your pacemaker from a very forceful contact. Please avoid heavy contact sports, such as rugby and kickboxing.

Can I drive with a pacemaker?

If you have a driving licence, you must tell the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) that you have a pacemaker. This is because abnormal heart problems can affect your ability to drive safely.

You can tell the DVLA by downloading or requesting the medical questionnaire 'H1' from the website www.gov.uk. After completing the form, please send it to DVLA by:

Fax: **0845 850 0095**

or

Post: **Drivers Medical Group
DVLA
Swansea
SA99 1DF**

Current regulations state that holders of a regular licence must not drive for one week after implantation of a pacemaker. Holders of large goods vehicle or passenger-carrying vehicle licences must not drive for at least six weeks after implantation.

It will be a condition of your driving licence that you attend regular pacemaker follow-ups.

Remember that you must wear a seatbelt while driving. You may find placing a small pad over your pacemaker helps make this more comfortable.

Can I travel abroad?

There are no formal restrictions to travelling abroad. Please remember to take your ID card with you and ensure you have adequate medical insurance. If you plan to be away for a long time, please discuss this with us at the pacing clinic as it may affect your check-up schedule.



Will security scanning equipment affect my pacemaker?

Security screening devices in shops and libraries are unlikely to affect your pacemaker. However, it is best to walk straight through rather than linger between the frames of the device.

Please remember to show your ID card to security staff before you go through the barrier at airports and follow their instructions.

Do household items affect my pacemaker?

Pacemakers are screened against mobile and cordless phone interference.

We recommend that you keep your mobile phone at least six inches (15 centimetres) away from your pacemaker as a precaution. This simply means using it on the opposite side from where your pacemaker is fitted.

Please do not keep your mobile in a shirt or jacket pocket close to your pacemaker even if the phone is switched off.

If your microwave oven is properly maintained, it will not affect your pacemaker.

If a magnet is placed very close

to your pacemaker, it may cause the device to pace constantly. You should avoid placing magnets close to your pacemaker and avoid exceptionally strong (industrial) magnets.

Remember that magnets can be found in many electronic devices, including hi-fi speakers.

Normal household appliances such as your television, radio or computer are all fine to use with your pacemaker. Gardening equipment is also fine, but do not drape power cables over your device. If you have any worries about interaction with specific equipment or items, please call the pacing clinic and we will be happy to help.

Sex and your pacemaker

A pacemaker should not affect your ability to have sex. If you have any questions regarding sex and your pacemaker, please ask your cardiologist.

When can I return to work?

You should be able to return to work as soon as your wound has fully healed and it feels comfortable. Please discuss this with your cardiologist as different people feel ready to return at different times.

It is important to remember that some jobs and working environments can affect your pacemaker. These include:

- Arc welding.
- Areas where industrial magnets are used – for example, scrap metal yards.
- Working with television, radio or radar transmission equipment.
- Military installations.
- Jobs that involve carrying hi-fi or PA speakers, or any other equipment containing magnets.

If you have any concerns about work – particularly if you work in any of the areas mentioned here – please discuss these with your cardiologist.



Who can I contact for more information?

If you have any questions or need more information, please contact the pacing clinic on **020 7351 8647** (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm).

Here are some websites you may find useful:

British Heart Foundation
www.bhf.org.uk

The British Heart Foundation produces a leaflet for pacemaker patients – we can provide you with a copy.

National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE)
www.nice.org.uk

Heart Rhythm Society
www.hrsonline.org

Arrhythmia Alliance
www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk

We cannot take responsibility for inaccuracies or omissions in these websites. Please talk to your cardiologist if you have any questions.

If you have concerns about any aspect of the service you have received in hospital and feel unable to talk to those people responsible for your care, call PALS on:

- Royal Brompton Hospital – 020 7349 7715
- Harefield Hospital – 01895 826 572

You can also email pals@rbht.nhs.uk. This is a confidential service.

Royal Brompton Hospital
Sydney Street
London
SW3 6NP
tel: 020 7352 8121
textphone: (18001) 020 7352 8121

Harefield Hospital
Hill End Road
Harefield
Middlesex
UB9 6JH
tel: 01895 823 737
textphone: (18001) 01895 823 737

Website: www.rbht.nhs.uk

إذا كنت ترغب في الحصول على ترجمة فورية لمضمون هذه الوثيقة إلى اللغة العربية، يرجى منك الاتصال بأحد مستخدمينا بجناح المصلحة التي يتم فيها استشفائك. أحد موظفينا سيسعى لترتيب إجراءات الترجمة وإتمامها في الوقت المناسب لك.

Brosurteki bilginin Türkçe tercemesi için tedavi görüyor olduğunuz bölüme bas vurunuz. Bölüm personeli tercemenin gerçekleşmesini en kısa zamanda ayarlayacaktır.

