

Permanent Pacemaker Implant (PPM)/ Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD)

Basic Facts:

A pacemaker or ICD has been recommended because there are signs that your heart is not beating fast enough or there is a block with the normal electrical signal which causes your heart to beat. A permanent pacemaker or ICD consists of a generator with leads (electrodes) which are usually implanted into the upper chest through a small incision, and the leads contact the heart muscle. The generator is a metal case containing the power source and a timer that regulates how often the pacemaker/ICD sends out electrical signals. The generator life is usually 7 to 10 years. The leads allow the pacemaker/ICD to monitor your heart rhythm and to send out electrical signals to make your heart beat when needed.

Care of Your Incision:

- Leave your incision clean and dry, and open to air. Remove the gauze dressing one day after your surgery and do not apply any lotions or antibiotic ointments to the incision.
- You may take a bath/shower the day after your procedure, and just let the water and soap gently wash over the incision site. Do not actively scrub the area and pat dry after and leave open to air.
- If there are steri-strips to the incision - leave them on. They will either fall off on their own, or a staff member will remove them at your 2 week follow up appointment.
- Look at the incision site daily, and call the office if you notice any signs of infection, (redness, swelling, warmth, tenderness, drainage or pain). Please call if you develop fever or chills.

- Mild soreness to the area and affected shoulder is normal. This should improve within 3-5 days, and OTC pain relievers may help as well.
- For women, you may put a gauze pad or the like underneath your bra straps to help with any discomfort.

Activity/Exercise:

- Avoid any heavy lifting (over 10 pounds) for 6 weeks. This also includes reaching above your head or across your shoulder. Do not drive for 2 days post implant. After the 6 weeks, you may resume normal activity unless told otherwise.
- Keep the arm sling on for 2-3 days post implantation. Continue with normal light activity such as brushing your teeth, combing your hair and eating. This will help to prevent your shoulder from “freezing up.”

Things that may affect your PPM/ICD:

- Avoid strong magnetic fields or electrical equipment. Most household appliances are safe to use, including the microwave, with an ICD or PPM.
- Avoid MRI scans and if you have concerns, please refer to your PPM or ICD booklet for specific tests which to avoid.
- If you use a cellular phone, hold it to the ear opposite of where the device was implanted. And do not carry the phone in a shirt pocket over the implant site.
- You may need to avoid dental procedures for 3 months after the implant, and you may need antibiotics prior to any dental procedure in the first year. Please call the office if you have questions.

When to Call the Office?

- You have any signs of infection to the incision site
- You have questions
- You experience any symptoms that are similar to the symptoms prior to having your procedure
- If you have an ICD - call if your device shocks you and feel okay afterwards

Appointments for check-ups:

- You will be seen in the office 2 weeks after your procedure
- You will then come back in 3 months for a PPM or ICD check
- After that, you will come in every 6 months for regular checks. These checks are done by pacemaker clinical staff. You will not see the physician or PA at these visits

Patients with ICD Implants:

- The ICD will do specific things depending the heart rhythm it detects and how the physician has programmed the device
 - If the device detects a fast rate, it may pace it even faster to get it into a “normal” rhythm
 - If the device detects a very fast rhythm, it will charge and deliver a shock that will reset your rhythm into a normal one. You will feel a brief “kick in the chest” feeling and then feel better with maybe burning sensations.
 - If the device detects an abnormal rhythm, but your heart changes back to a “normal” rhythm, the device will not shock you.

- Please call the office after you receive a shock - only if you feel okay after
- If you do not feel okay after the shock, you receive 3 or more shocks within a few minutes, or have increased shortness of breath or chest pain after the shock - call 911

