



## IMPORTANT PACEMAKER INFORMATION

### Before You Go Home from the Hospital You Should Receive:

- A **pacemaker booklet** from the hospital pacemaker department. This booklet contains important information for you and your family to read. This booklet will explain how your pacemaker works.
- A temporary **identification card** from the pacemaker manufacturer will also be given to you by the hospital. We strongly recommend that you **keep this card in your purse or wallet**. It is important for all health care providers to know you have a pacemaker and to have access to the information on this card if needed. The pacemaker manufacturer will mail you a permanent plastic identification card usually one month after your surgery.
- **Prescriptions** for an antibiotic for several days and pain medication. Please verify all your medication with your doctor such as heart rhythm medication and Coumadin before going home.

### Care of Your Incision

- **Leave your incision open to air.** Remove the gauze dressing the day after your surgery if it has not been done in the hospital.
- **Keep your incision clean and dry. Do NOT apply lotion or antibiotic ointments** to your incision.
- **Bathing and showering** - Your doctor may recommend one of the following options:

Option 1: You may **resume bathing or showering the day after your surgery**. Avoid allowing the shower stream to directly impact or hit your incision. You may let the soap and water gently "spill" over your incision. **Do NOT actively wash or scrub your incision until it is healed**. After bathing or showering, gently pat your incision dry with a clean towel and leave open to air.

Option 2: You may resume bathing the day after your surgery. You may **resume showering 3 days after your surgery**. **Avoid getting your incision wet until the steri-strips or staples are removed** (usually 7 to 10 days). You may temporarily cover your incision during a shower with a piece of plastic taped in place. Avoid allowing the shower stream to directly impact or hit your incision until it is healed. **Do NOT actively wash or scrub your incision until it is healed**. If your incision gets wet, gently pat it dry with a clean towel and leave open to air.

- **Avoid touching or rubbing your incision.** This will help your incision heal.



- **Do NOT remove the steri-strips** (strips of tape across the incision). They will be removed by the pacemaker clinical staff at your first office visit in 7 to 10 days if they do not fall off on their own.
- If you have staples on your incision, they will be removed at your first office visit in 7 to 10 days.
- **Look at your incision daily** for several weeks as it is healing. Call the office and speak to a nurse if you experience increased redness, swelling, drainage, warmth or tenderness around your incision. Also call the office if you have a fever or chills.
- Mild to moderate soreness at the pacemaker site or affected shoulder is not unusual. This soreness should gradually decrease over 3 or 4 weeks as it heals. Over the counter pain relievers may be taken unless otherwise ordered by your doctor.
- For women, a light gauze pad or clean powder puff placed over the incision may be more comfortable with a brassiere.

### **Activity / Exercise**

- You may gradually resume your daily activities as tolerated. This includes light to moderate exercise (such as walking) that does not excessively jar or impact your pacemaker.
- Avoid vigorous activity or outdoor activities that cause excessive sweating, such as yard work, for 1 week after your surgery.
- **Avoid heavy lifting (over 10 lbs) or activities that require strenuous reaching above your head or across your shoulder.** Examples include; reaching for items on an overhead shelf, swinging a golf club, shooting a gun, swimming, gardening, and weight lifting.
- **Do not completely immobilize the affected arm and shoulder.** Use your arm to do simple activities such as eating, brushing your teeth, and combing your hair. This will prevent your shoulder from “freezing up.”
- After 6 weeks you may resume most activities unless specifically instructed by the pacemaker nurse or doctor.
- It is not necessary to routinely check your own pulse.

### **Things That May Affect Your Pacemaker**

- **Avoid strong magnetic fields or electrical equipment.** This includes electrical generator plants such as Hoover dam, **MRI scans** (magnetic resonance imaging), arc welders, large engines, and large stereo speakers. Please refer to your pacemaker booklet or call the office for detailed information.



- Microwave ovens will not affect your pacemaker and are safe to use. Household appliances such as electric blankets, electric shavers, and hair dryers are also safe to use.
- We recommend that **if you use a cellular phone, hold it up to the ear on the opposite side of your pacemaker.** Do NOT carry your cell phone in a shirt pocket over your pacemaker.
- **Notify all health care providers that you have a pacemaker.** This includes doctors, dentists, chiropractors, x-ray technicians, etc.
- Your doctor may advise you to **avoid dental procedures for 3 months** after your surgery if possible.
- In the first year after your surgery, your doctor may recommend that you **take an antibiotic pill before any dental procedure.** The dentist may prescribe the antibiotics for you or you may call the office for a prescription.
- If you have any special concerns or questions please call the office.

#### **Please Call The Office If You:**

- **Suddenly experience symptoms of dizziness or lightheadedness, that are NOT related to a position change, such as standing up or getting out of bed.**
- **Experience the same symptoms that prompted your doctor to implant the pacemaker.**
- **Experience increased redness, pain, or swelling of your pacemaker site.**
- **Develop a fever or chills.**
- Have any questions or concerns regarding your pacemaker.
- Need to reschedule an appointment.

#### **Office Visits / Appointments**

- **Taking care of your pacemaker requires regular office or telephone check-ups.**
- The usual schedule for pacemaker check-ups is:
  - First visit – 7 to 10 days after surgery.
  - Second visit – 3 to 4 months after surgery.
  - Then every 6 months until the pacemaker battery starts to show signs of depletion. Please refer to your pacemaker booklet for further details.



- During your first pacemaker check-up:
  - You will meet and have your pacemaker evaluated by a member of the pacemaker clinical staff. This will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes.
  - The pacemaker clinical staff will examine your incision and remove the staples or steri-strips, if present.
  - Generally, you will not be scheduled to see the physician on this visit.
- During your second pacemaker check-up, 3 to 4 months after your surgery:
  - The pacemaker clinical staff will evaluate your pacemaker and adjust it to optimum efficiency. This adjustment is important because it can prolong the life of the pacemaker battery by several years.
  - Generally, you will also be examined by a physician or nurse practitioner.
  - The decision to continue with clinic or telephone pacemaker evaluations will be made.
- **Your pacemaker will be checked every 6 months after your second (3-4 month) visit.** The pacemaker clinical staff will evaluate your pacemaker, check your blood pressure, and list your medications. You will NOT routinely see the physician, nurse practitioner, or nurse unless there is a heart rhythm or pacemaker problem. A full report of your pacemaker evaluation will be sent to your primary doctor.
- When the pacemaker battery starts to show signs of depletion, then your evaluations will need to be more frequent, usually once a month until the battery is replaced. A pacemaker battery generally lasts 6 to 10 years.

### **Other Important Information**

- **Please bring all your medications with you to all office visits.** It is important for us to have accurate information regarding the medications that all of your doctors are prescribing for you.
- Please notify the office as soon as possible if you need to cancel or reschedule an appointment.

### **Useful Websites**

- [www.Medtronic.com](http://www.Medtronic.com)
- [www.Guidant.com](http://www.Guidant.com)
- [www.hrsOnline.com](http://www.hrsOnline.com)