

*Danbury Hospital Patient Education Sheet*

## What is a Pacemaker?

### What is a pacemaker and why would I need one?

A pacemaker is an implanted device that helps regulate and maintain the electrical system of your heart. The electrical system of the heart stimulates the heart muscle to contract and creates a heartbeat.

Your heart has its own natural pacemaker. An impulse is sent through the normal electrical pathway of the heart. The impulse starts at the top of the heart and travels down to the lower chambers of your heart.

Your physician might recommend a pacemaker implant if there is a problem with your heart's electrical system causing your heart to beat:

- Too slow (Bradycardia)
- Too fast (Tachycardia)
- Irregularly (Atrial Fibrillation)
- Or when there is a block in the electrical pathway

Symptoms that often occur when you need a pacemaker are: fainting, near fainting, dizziness, fatigue, shortness of breath and a change in your tolerance to exercise.

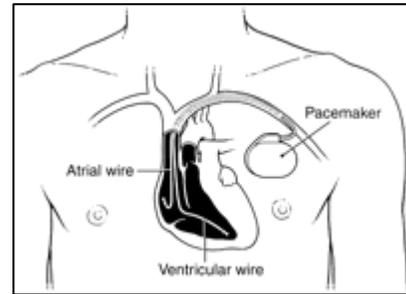
A pacemaker is made up of two major parts: a *generator* or *battery* and *pacing leads*. The *generator* sends an electrical impulse through the *pacing leads* to the heart muscle creating a heartbeat. The Pacemaker is implanted during a procedure that takes about two (2) hours. The generator is placed under the skin of your chest just below the collarbone and connected to the pacing leads that are placed in the heart.

### Are there any special preparations prior to the procedure?

Your cardiologist may order blood work prior to the procedure. If you have diabetes or take Coumadin, you will need to contact your doctor before the procedure to adjust your medication dosages if needed. If you have a contrast or dye allergy, please tell your cardiologist and the hospital staff when your procedure is being planned.

**If you are having this test done as an outpatient, you must arrange to have someone drive you home.** Do not eat or drink six (6) hours before your procedure.

Bring a current list of your medications and allergies with you on the day of your procedure. Unless otherwise directed by your physician, take all of your regular daily medications. Wear comfortable clothing that is easy to change. Please leave valuables at home, such as jewelry, money, checkbook and credit cards.



### What can I expect on the day of my procedure?

- Once you have arrived at the Patient Care Area, a nurse will greet you and escort you to your patient bay. Your private area will have a small television and a telephone.
- You will be asked to change into a hospital gown.
- The nurse will obtain your height and weight. You will be connected to monitoring equipment including a blood pressure cuff, a finger clip to monitor your blood oxygen level and a heart monitor.
- The nurse will ask you about any allergies you may have, and review your list of your current medications.
- An intravenous line will be started.
- The area where the pacemaker is to be inserted will be shaved. This is most commonly the upper left side of the chest.
- You will meet a Nurse Practitioner and the performing Cardiologist. They will review your medical history and discuss the procedure with you, and if you wish, with your family or friend(s).
- You will be asked to empty your bladder just before the procedure.
- Once the consent is signed and you and the team are ready, you will be brought to the lab on a stretcher.

- The staff will assist you onto the procedural table. You will need to lie flat during the procedure.
- You will be connected to monitoring equipment for the study: blood pressure cuff, finger probe and heart monitor.
- Pacemaker placement is done in a sterile environment. You will see all staff members in the lab wearing a cap and mask; the physician and the assistant will wear a sterile gown as well. The staff will include a circulating nurse whose job it is to take care of you during the procedure. The scrub person will assist the physician.
- Your gown will be removed (the metal snaps interfere with the picture). If you desire, warm blankets will be placed over you. Your privacy is important to us and you will not be exposed. The site that your pacemaker will be implanted will be prepped and a sterile drape will be placed over you.
- Most procedures are done with light sedation. It is important that you are able to talk to your nurse and physician.
- At the start of the procedure, the skin in the area of the incision site is numbed. Then a 2-3 inch long incision will be made just below the collarbone. You should only have a sensation of pressure at the incision.
- The cardiologist will thread the leads into the right side of the heart.
- During the study, you may feel skipped beats, a faster heartbeat or "palpitations" in your chest. These feelings are very common during the placement of the leads and go away quickly.
- At the end of the procedure, steri strips and a dressing will be placed over the incision site. You will be returned to the patient care area.

### **What should I expect after my procedure?**

- Immediately after your procedure you will be on bed rest for several hours as ordered by your cardiologist.
- Depending on doctor preference, you may stay over one night and be discharged the next day, or be discharged the same day as your procedure.

- Care of your pacemaker dressing and activity precautions will be reviewed. You will be given a signed copy of discharge instructions to refer to and take home.

### **What kind of follow-up care do I need after my Pacemaker is placed?**

You will be asked to make a follow-up office appointment to see your cardiologist about 7-10 days after your implant. The steri strips placed over the incision site help support the incision site while it heals. They will peel and fall off in 7-14 days. You should not peel them off yourself.

While you are here for your procedure, you will be given a temporary Pacemaker ID Card. It has important information about your device. The Pacemaker Company will send you a permanent card in about 3 months. You should carry this card with you at all times.

A vital part of your follow-up care includes checking your pacemaker on a regular basis to insure everything is working properly. Your pacemaker will be checked two ways:

- 1-2 times a year during a visit to your cardiologists office
- Over the telephone with a pacemaker follow-up service such as Raytel Cardiac Services. The Service will contact you within a few weeks after your procedure to teach you all about phone checks. The Service will provide you with the right equipment to do your phone checks.

### **Directions to your appointment at Danbury Hospital:**

Follow directions to the BLUE parking lot and park in the Purple Section. Enter the main lobby on the fifth floor. Take the Tower elevator to the 7th floor. Once off the elevator, take 2 left turns and proceed straight into the Patient Care Area. If you have further questions, call your cardiologist or Danbury Hospital Invasive Cardiology at 739-7436.

*Source:*

Heart Rhythm Society @ hrsonline.org

American College of Cardiology at www.cardiosmart.org

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*For more information, or to learn about the specialized services and programs available at Danbury Hospital, please visit [www.DanburyHospital.org](http://www.DanburyHospital.org)*