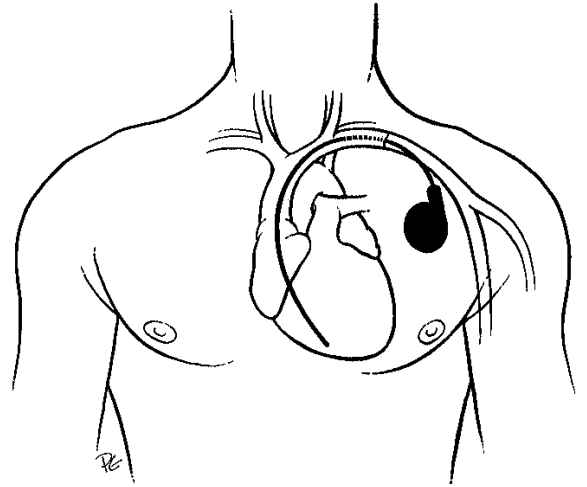


What is a Pacemaker?

A pacemaker is a small unit that helps your heart beat more regularly. It does this with a small electric stimulation that helps control your heartbeat. Your doctor puts the pacemaker under the skin on your chest, just under your collarbone. It's hooked up to your heart with tiny wires.

You may need a pacemaker to keep your heart contracting and pumping blood adequately. In this way your body gets the blood, oxygen and food that it needs. Some people just need a pacemaker for a short time (like after a heart attack) and may use a kind that's outside the skin. The battery unit for this type can be worn on a belt.



With a pacemaker, your heart should pump almost as well as it did before. Today many people with pacemakers lead full, active lives.

Why would I need one?

- Your heart beats too slowly.
- Your heart doesn't beat regularly.
- There's a block in your heart's electrical pathways.

How does it work?

- A pacemaker uses batteries to send electric signals to your heart to help it pump the right way.
- An electrode is put next to your heart.
- Tiny electric charges that you can't feel move through the wire to your heart.
- Pacemakers work only when needed. They go on when your heartbeat is too slow.

How do I live with my pacemaker?

- Check your pulse and keep a record of it the way your doctor tells you.
- Your doctor will teach you how to know when you need new batteries and how to replace them.
- Take your medicine the way your doctor tells you.
- Tell your doctor if you have trouble breathing, if you gain weight or get puffy legs or ankles, or if you faint, black out or get dizzy.
- Follow all doctor's instructions and keep your appointments.
- Carry an I.D. card with you so others know you have a pacemaker.
- Tell your other doctors and your dentist that you have a pacemaker. Certain types of medical equipment may affect how a pacemaker works.
- Tell airport security that you have a pacemaker.
- Household microwaves, electric appliances, most office and light shop equipment WILL NOT affect your pacemaker.
- If you work around industrial microwaves, electricity, cars or other large motors, ask your doctor about possible effects.

Can I use a cell phone or microwave oven if I have a pacemaker?

Microwave ovens, electric blankets, remote controls for TV and other common household appliances won't affect your pacemaker. You can use a cell phone, too, if you take these steps:

- Hold the phone to the ear on the side of your body opposite from your pacemaker.
- When your phone is on, try to keep it at least 6 inches away from your pacemaker. For example, don't carry your phone in your breast pocket over your pacemaker.

Do I have to take it easy?

- Most people with a pacemaker lead full lives.
- It's good to do some physical activity every day.
- You can exercise if your doctor says so.
- You shouldn't overdo it — stop before you're tired.
- You can have sex.

How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
 2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease.
 3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at StrokeAssociation.org.
- We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.
- Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

What are the Warning Signs of Heart Attack and Stroke?

Warning Signs of Heart Attack:

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

Warning Signs of Stroke:

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
 - Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
 - Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
 - Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
 - Sudden, severe headache with no known cause
- Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

How long will my batteries last?

When can I take showers and baths?