



## Discharge information for pacemaker patients

Now you have your new pacemaker, we hope you make a swift recovery and are soon back to normal. Here are just a few reminders of some of the things you will have been told over the last few days. Please keep this as a reference.

Please remember that the cardiology team here at University Hospitals Birmingham are here to help. If you have a question, are worried or need to change an appointment, call us on the appropriate numbers below:

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham	<b>0121 371 2545</b>
Good Hope Hospital	<b>0121 424 9675</b>
Solihull Hospital	<b>0121 424 4358</b>
Heartlands Hospital	<b>0121 424 3736</b>

The department is open **08:00–17:00 Monday to Friday**.

For emergency advice only, during evenings and weekends contact:

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham, CCU	<b>0121 371 2562</b>
Good Hope Hospital, CCU	<b>0121 424 7467</b>

**If you feel very unwell, seek medical advice.**

### Getting back to normal after your surgery

- Until your device check you should avoid heavy lifting and stretching the arm closest to your operation site. Housework such as vacuuming and ironing can be done with caution.
- Gradually increase your exercise as you feel able.
- Avoid activities that could be dangerous, i.e. swimming alone, climbing a ladder or using dangerous electrical equipment e.g. chainsaws.
- Partaking in dangerous sports e.g. scuba diving is not advisable.
- Avoid contact sports such as rugby or martial arts. It is unlikely you will damage your pacemaker, but damage or displacement of your pacing lead(s) could occur. Damage to the surrounding skin may lead to an infection.
- If you still work and you think equipment in your work environment may cause a problem or a concern, please talk to us about those concerns so that we can offer advice and guidance to keep you working safely and confidently.

### Appliances

Microwave ovens, radios and other everyday appliances do not affect your pacemaker as long as they are in good working order. Mobile and cordless phones should be kept at least 15cm away from your pacemaker. Try to use your phone on the opposite side to your device and do not carry the phone in a breast pocket. Avoid getting too close to magnets such as those in security systems at shop exits. Walk swiftly through the system and do not stop inside of the scanner.

## Information for Patients

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### Sex

This can be resumed when you feel fit.

### Driving

You should not drive for one week from the date of your operation. After this time, you may drive but we would recommend that you avoid doing so if your shoulder is still uncomfortable. You should contact the DVLA and inform them that you have a pacemaker. They will send you a form to complete. If you need help with the form, we will be happy to help you complete it. You may find this number useful, when trying to contact the DVLA: **0300 790 6806**.

It is advisable to inform your insurance company about your pacemaker.

### Travel

**This is not usually restricted.** When going through security at an airport, avoid going through the security archway by informing staff you have a pacemaker and showing your ID card.

Comprehensive, yet affordable travel insurance is obviously a concern for many people. Remember to shop around to get the best deal.

The British Heart Foundation has a helpful list of providers that have been recommended to them by people with heart conditions.

British Heart Foundation

Tel: **0300 330 3311**, web: [www.bhf.org](http://www.bhf.org)

Alternatively, if you have access to the internet, the Arrhythmia Alliance has lots of information on insurance companies who appear to be receptive to people with rhythm problems and implantable devices. You can access them at: [www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk](http://www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk)

### Medical procedures

- **Dental treatment** – tell your dentist you have a pacemaker. Drills and ultrasonic cleaning equipment are safe. You should not need antibiotics prior to any treatment because you have a pacemaker.
- **Operations** – inform your surgeon you have a pacemaker. If they have any questions about your device, they can contact your follow up centre on the contact numbers listed above.
- **Other tests** – tell the staff that you have a pacemaker, as you may not be able to have certain tests. Remember to always have your ID card with you.
- MRI scans may not be possible once you have a pacemaker implanted unless specific safety criteria are met
- If you suffer from an upset stomach (diarrhoea and vomiting) and are currently taking tablets for your heart condition, you should seek prompt medical advice. Salt and medication levels may become low and could affect your heart rhythm.

## Information for Patients

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### MedicAlert bracelets/neck chains

Some patients find these useful. Again, there are lots of companies/organisations providing this service, so shop around.

MedicAlert

Tel: **01908 951045**

Web: [www.medicalert.org.uk](http://www.medicalert.org.uk)

Medi-Tag

Tel: **0121 200 1616**

Web: [www.medi-tag.co.uk](http://www.medi-tag.co.uk)

Mediband

Web: [www.theidbandco.com/Alert-Bands](http://www.theidbandco.com/Alert-Bands)

If you live alone, you may wish to consider a scheme such as the **Careline call system**. Careline was established in 1988 and is now the largest provider of emergency alarm monitoring in the UK, providing reassurance 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.

Tel: **0800 101 3333**

### Diaphragmatic pacing – twitch (CRT devices only)

The left ventricular pacing wire can occasionally stimulate a nerve in your chest to cause the diaphragm to pulsate. If this happens, you may notice the left side of your stomach start to twitch especially if you sit or lie in a certain position. This is not dangerous but can be uncomfortable. If you notice this, do not panic. Call us on the number you have been given and we can then see you in clinic. In most cases the problem can be solved with a simple, painless adjustment of the pacemaker's settings.

### Monitoring of your device at home

The make and type of your pacemaker is decided during your operation. The decision is based on which device will best suit your individual needs. Most modern devices can now be monitored remotely by your hospital clinic using either a small monitor which can be plugged in at home or by using an APP on a smart mobile phone. We will talk about the best option for you either whilst you are in hospital or when you attend the hospital clinic.

### Identification card

You will be given your pacemaker ID card prior to discharge. Please always keep this safe and with you.

### Wound care

#### Very important

Try to avoid touching or rubbing the wound area unnecessarily. Good hand hygiene is the best form of infection control. Wash your hands before and after your dressing change.

Bruising around the site and into the breast area may, in some people be quite extensive, especially if you are taking aspirin, clopidogrel (Plavix), warfarin or any combination of these medications.

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If there is any sign of infection around the wound, i.e. redness, feels hot or sore, if you feel unwell or if there is any increase in swelling at the site, then please contact us as soon as possible.

### University Hospitals Birmingham

#### Caring for your wound

- **Paper stitches** – if your Steri-Strips do not fall off within seven days, please remove them
- **Your stitches do not need to be removed.** They will dissolve naturally.
- **Your stitches need to be removed on or around.**

Please make an appointment with the nurse at your GP surgery

#### How to care for your wound

It may not be necessary for a nurse to check your wound following discharge. It is therefore important that you observe your wound daily and carry out the following:

- Wash and dry your hands thoroughly before and after touching your wound.
- Keep the dressing on for seven days. You may shower but keep the dressing out of the direct water flow.
- A shower is best or run lukewarm water over your wound. Do not soak in a bath until the wound has fully healed.
- Pat the wound dry with a clean towel
- Do not rub your wound when washing as this can delay healing.
- Do not use perfumed soaps, creams etc. on the wound until completely healed.
- After a week or so you should not need a dressing over the area.

#### Signs of infection

- Signs to look out for are:
- Pain or tenderness
- Localised swelling
- Redness and heat
- Discharge (pus) – this is something that happens quite late on
- Feeling generally unwell

If you are unwell with symptoms of infection (temperature above 38 degrees C) please ask your healthcare provider to consider a diagnosis of device related infection.

Nurse's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Print name: \_\_\_\_\_

#### For further information, please contact your local centre:

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham	<b>0121 371 2545</b>
Good Hope Hospital	<b>0121 424 9675</b>
Solihull Hospital	<b>0121 424 4358</b>
Heartlands Hospital	<b>0121 424 3736</b>

**Monday–Friday, 08:00–17:00**

### Department address and contact information:

#### Cardiology

Queen Elizabeth Hospital Birmingham  
Mindelsohn Way, Edgbaston  
Birmingham, B15 2GW  
Telephone: 0121 371 2000

If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email: [interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk](mailto:interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk).