

After Your Pacemaker Generator Change

What you need to know

Who to Call

- If you have questions about your appointments, call your Cardiology Clinic weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.:
 - **UWMC - Montlake patients:** Call 206.598.4300.
 - **UWMC - Northwest patients:** Call 206.363.1004.
- If you have a question about your procedure, care after your procedure, or your follow-up:
 - Weekdays from 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., call your EP Nurse
_____ at _____.
 - After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Electrophysiology (EP) Fellow on call. The EP Fellow is a doctor who works with your primary electrophysiologist. These doctors specialize in caring for patients with pacemakers.
 - **For all urgent concerns, call 911.**

For Your Safety

Anesthesia and sedation can make you sleepy and make it hard to think clearly. **If you had ANY anesthesia or sedation for this procedure:**

- **A responsible adult must take you home.** You may not take a bus, shuttle, taxi, or any other transportation by yourself.



A responsible adult must take you home after your procedure.

- **For the next 24 hours:**

- Do **NOT** drive.
- Make sure you have a responsible adult who can help you if needed during this time.
- Do **NOT** be responsible for children, pets, or an adult who needs care.
- Do **NOT** drink alcohol or take drugs other than the ones your doctors prescribed or suggested.
- Do **NOT** make important decisions or sign legal papers.

Wound Care

- Call one of the numbers above **right away** if you have:
 - Redness, swelling, or drainage from the puncture site
 - Drainage
 - Fever higher than 100.4 (38.0)
 - Chills
 - Any concerns or questions about your wound
- Remove your dressing (bandage) 24 to 48 hours after your surgery.
- **Your wound was closed with skin glue.** You may shower 48 hours after your surgery, but do not soak your incision until it is **fully** healed.
- Do not put lotion or powder on your incision until it is **fully** healed.
- Avoid touching the area over or around your pacemaker. Do not poke or twist your pacemaker.
- In the car, add some padding to your seat belt strap if it crosses over your pacemaker implant site. Keep this padding in place until your wound is fully healed.
- **Do not let anyone poke or probe your incision** with fingers or instruments before checking with us first. If a healthcare provider feels this needs to be done to provide your care, have them call the EP Fellow **before** doing this type of exam or procedure.
- We will check your wound 7 to 14 days after your surgery. It is **very** important that you go to this appointment and all follow-up visits.

See the appointment page your nurse gave you for dates and times of your follow-up visits.

Activity Restrictions

Travel

If you have travel plans in the first 2 weeks after your surgery, please check with your doctor for instructions.

Other

- Your activity restrictions could last 3 months or longer, based on your treatment plan. Check with your doctor before doing any activities that:
 - Involve swinging your arm, such as swimming, golfing, tennis, or vacuuming
 - Can injure your shoulder or wound site, such as shooting a gun, wrestling, or playing football
- Follow your doctor's instructions about driving and sexual activity.
- As always, avoid touching the area over or around your pacemaker. Do not poke or twist your pacemaker.

Special Long-Term Precautions

Travel

- Always carry your pacemaker identification (ID) card.
- If you must pass through a metal detector, hand your pacemaker ID card to security staff and tell them that you might set off the alarm.
- You may also want to carry a card with this information about your pacemaker translated into the language(s) of the country (or countries) you will visit or travel through.
- Although some studies show there are no risks to pacemakers from metal detectors, most makers of the devices still advise caution:
 - You may walk through the metal-detection arch, but do not stay inside the arch or lean on the sides of the structure.
 - If a metal-detection hand wand is used, ask security staff to avoid waving or holding it over your pacemaker.
 - If you feel dizzy or have fast heartbeats (*palpitations*) when you are near a metal detector, move farther away. Your pacemaker should begin to work properly right away.

- Body scanners that are used in some airports and other places will not affect your pacemaker.
- Always carry a full list of your current medicines. Include their doses, how often you take them each day, and why you take them.
- Always carry your medicines with you in your carry-on bags. Do **not** pack them in your checked luggage.
- Carry your care providers' phone numbers in case of emergency.

Magnetic Fields

Magnets or magnetic fields are found in or are created by many items we are around every day. Some of these are:

- Small appliances with motors
- Stereo speakers
- Gas engines
- Cell phones
- Desktop and laptop computers
- Welding machines
- CB radios
- *Magnetic resonance imaging* (MRI) machines
- Anti-theft devices in stores
- Metal detectors

Most of these items, such as microwaves and blenders, are safe to be close to, but some create magnetic fields that are strong enough to interfere with how your pacemaker works.

Some basic advice and warnings about magnetic fields are on pages 4, 5, and 6. **For more details, contact the maker of your pacemaker.**

NOTE: These recommendations all assume that the item you are using is properly grounded, is in proper working order, and is being used for its intended purpose.

Cell Phones

Most cell phones are safe if you:

- Carry your phone **at least** 6 inches (15 centimeters) away from your implant site. Most cell phones keep sending a signal even when they are not in use.
- Hold it to your ear on the **opposite side** of your pacemaker.

Radio Transmitters

Radio transmitters such as CB radios, walkie-talkies, and remote-control toys may interfere with your pacemaker. Here are guidelines for distances to keep from these items:

Watts Generated	Distance to Keep from It
3 watts	12 inches (30 centimeters)
25 to 199 watts	3 feet (1 meter)
200 watts or more	10 feet (3 meters)

If you are unsure about the power output of your radio transmitter, call the maker of the device.

Car Engines and Tools or Appliances with Small Motors

- Most small appliances or hand tools with motors are safe to use when the item is grounded, in good condition, and is held the advised distance from your body for safe and proper operation.
- Use caution when working on car engines. Keep your upper body at least 24 inches (60 centimeters) away from a running car engine.

Electric Toothbrushes

- Keep the toothbrush handle at least 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) away from your pacemaker.
- Keep at least 6 inches (15 centimeters) between the charger and your pacemaker.

Medical Procedures or Equipment

Be sure the person who is doing your procedure knows you have a pacemaker. **Never assume everyone involved in your care knows this.** It is safer to be sure and to remind those involved in your care.

Take precautions with these procedures or devices:

- *Electrocautery* (a surgical procedure that uses an electric current to remove unwanted tissue, seal off blood vessels, or create an incision)
- Placement of a *central venous catheter* (a small tube that is placed in a large vein to deliver medicine)
- *Lithotripsy* (a procedure that uses shock waves to break up stones in the kidney, bladder, or ureter)
- *Ultrasound* (an imaging method that uses sound waves)

- *Electrolysis* (hair removal)
- External *cardioversion* or *defibrillation* (a procedure to bring an abnormal heart rhythm back to normal)
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines

Note: At this time, MRI machines **are NOT safe** for patients with pacemakers to be in or around. But, some new pacemakers can be near an MRI machine. **You must avoid all MRI exams** unless your doctor tells you that your pacemaker is MRI-safe.

- Hearing aid with a coil around the neck that detects sounds and sends digital signals to the amplifier

Note: Before using this type of hearing aid, call the company who makes your pacemaker.

- *Radiation* therapy (usually used in cancer treatment)
- TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation, a pain-control device)
- Body-fat measuring scales

Other Precautions

Many makers of pacemakers also advise you to **avoid being around or using these items:**

- Arc welders
- Gas-powered chainsaws
- Induction furnaces such as kilns
- Magnetic (therapy) mattress pads or pillows
- Electric steel furnaces
- Dielectric heaters (heaters that use radiowaves or microwaves to heat)
- Electrical transmissions towers (if you are **inside** a restricted area)
- Jackhammers
- Stun guns

Dental Work

- Tell your dentist that you have a pacemaker. Most times, you will not need to be concerned that any of the devices the dentist uses will interfere with your pacemaker.

- If you did not need antibiotics for dental procedures before your surgery, then you will not need antibiotics now that you have a pacemaker. If you have questions, please ask your doctor.

Your Pacemaker

This handout covers **only** basic precautions you may need to take with your pacemaker. Each device may have special precautions to consider.

If you have any questions about what might cause problems for your pacemaker, contact the maker for more specific information.

Here is contact information for 4 companies that make pacemakers:

Abbott

www.sjm.com
818.362.6822
800.681.9293

Guidant/Boston Scientific

www.guidant.com
866.GUIDANT (866.484.3268)
www.bostonscientific.com
888.272.1001

Biotronik

www.biotronikusa.com
800.547.0394

Medtronic

www.medtronic.com
800.551.5544
800.328.2518

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- **For general questions**
weekdays 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.:
 - Montlake patients: call 206.598.4300
 - Northwest patients: call 206.363.1004
- **For questions related to your procedure** weekdays 6:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.:
 - Montlake patients: call 206.598.7146
 - Northwest patients: call 206.668.1084
 Ask to talk with a nurse.
- **For urgent concerns related to your procedure**, or if it is after hours or on a weekend or holiday: call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Cardiology E Fellow on call.