



Nepean Cardiology

What is Pacemaker?

A Pacemaker is a small device that helps maintain a healthy heart beat using electrical impulses. It consists of a battery and leads, and it sits under the skin on the left or right side of your chest. The Pacemaker sends electrical signals to your heart to help it to beat at a normal rate.

Why would I need a Pacemaker?

Your Cardiologist will recommend a Pacemaker if your heartbeat has become too fast, too slow or irregular - a disorder known as an arrhythmia. Arrhythmias can have many causes, including:

- The natural ageing process
 - Inherited or genetic causes
 - Previous heart attack or heart valve or heart muscle problems
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How do I prepare for a Pacemaker?

As this procedure is undertaken in hospital you will need to complete your hospital admission paperwork, which the Nepean Cardiology staff will provide to you, then return to the admitting hospital at least three days prior to your admission date.

You will need to fast for six hours prior to the admission time however any medication needed during the fasting period (other than those that you've been instructed to cease) can be taken with a sip of water. Please continue to take all medications as normal unless specifically directed by your Cardiologist to cease them. Please bring a list of current medications or, ideally, the medication bottles with you to the hospital. You will be unable to drive for 3 weeks after this procedure. Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous exercise for 5 days after the procedure. Please pack an overnight bag as you will be required to stay in hospital for at least one night following this procedure.



What should I expect on the day of my Pacemaker?

Your Pacemaker surgery takes place in an operating theatre. You will be attached to heart monitors and have a cannula inserted in a vein in your arm. You will be given medication to make you relaxed and provide pain relief during the procedure. During your pacemaker surgery, your doctor will:

- Give you a local anaesthetic - to numb your collarbone area
- Make a small incision near your collarbone - to create a pocket for the pacemaker battery
- Thread the Pacemaker leads inside a large vein - and in the right side of your heart
- Fix the end of the lead into position inside the heart - using tiny screws
- Program the pacemaker - and perform tests to ensure it is working appropriately
- Tuck the pacemaker battery inside the pocket - under the skin
- Close the incision - using stitches and apply a dressing to the area

Afterwards, there will be a bulge visible under the skin where the pacemaker has been inserted.

What happens afterwards?

Once your Pacemaker surgery is finished, you will be moved to the recovery area or to the ward to rest. You may be tender or sore and have some bruising at the site of the surgery, this should go away after a few weeks. You should be able to return home in most circumstances within 24-48 hours.

Are there any risks?

The most common risk for this procedure is bruising or swelling at the Pacemaker site. Less common risks are:

- Movement of the pacemaker generator or leads
- Infection, bleeding or blood clots
- Vein or heart valve damage, resulting from pacemaker leads
- Allergic reaction to medications
- Heart attack and stroke
- Death from this procedure is rare