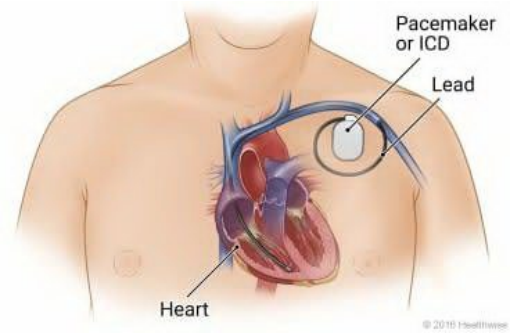
Pacemaker for Kids

A **pacemaker** is a small, computerized device that is placed under the skin and connected to your heart with wires. It monitors and helps control the heart rhythm.

Though it paces the heart, a pacemaker **does not give you a shock that you feel**. The doctor or nurse will explain how the device is programmed. Pacemakers have a battery that can often last a decade or more before replacement.



Activity Restrictions
Your child can return to school, daycare, and/or work in about 2 days with certain restrictions. Discuss arm restrictions with the doctor. Your child may need to follow these for up to 4 weeks. Restrictions include:

- **No** lifting over 10 lbs.
- **Do not** raise implant arm above shoulder
- **Avoid** repetitive arm movements (swimming, bowling, golf)
- Wear a sling for 2–3 days after surgery
- Start gentle shoulder circles 2–4 times daily (don't lift too high)
- **Avoid** for 4 weeks:
  - Direct impact to your pacemaker
  - Dental work
  - Swimming
  - Tattoos/piercings
  - Chiropractic care

Wound Care

- Remove the bandage after 72 hours and then leave incision open to air
- Keep the area clean and dry
- Let Steri-Strips® fall off naturally, if present
- Absorbable stitches, if present, may fall off in 2–3 weeks
- **No** swimming or soaking for 4 weeks (showers are OK)
- **Avoid** sunlight/tanning beds on the incision for 4 weeks
- Expect a slight bulge over the device.
- **Avoid** tight clothing

Pain and Medicine
Use Tylenol® or ibuprofen for mild pain. You may be prescribed other medicine for stronger pain. Use an ice pack to reduce swelling. Take your antibiotics for 3 days (to prevent infection).

Follow-Up and Monitoring

- **In 1-2 weeks:** Return for wound check
- **In 6-8 weeks:** Return to clinic for device check
- **Every 3 months:** Send remote device data
- **Every 6-12 months:** Return to clinic for check-ups

Electrical Safety

Avoid:

- **Car repair:** Working under the hood of a running car.
- **Electrocautery (used in surgery/dental work):** Tell your doctor that you have a pacemaker before procedures.
- **MRI scans:** Talk with your doctor before
- **Arc welding**
- **Magnetic snaps or badges:** Keep 6 inches away from your pacemaker.

Use with caution:

- **Cell phones/headphones**: We suggest keeping devices 6 inches from your pacemaker.
- **Store security systems**: Walk through normally and don't linger.
- **Airport security**: These often do not affect the pacemaker so you can walk through like normal. If you have any concerns, show your Medical Device ID card.
- **TENS therapy**: Talk with your doctor. This is okay except never on or near the device.
- **Therapeutic radiation**
- **Certain roller coasters:** Some may be powered by strong magnets. These are generally safe, but it would be best to avoid.

Safe devices:

- Microwave ovens
- Hair dryers
- Electric blankets/jackets (keep batteries 6" from chest)
- Computers, TVs, radios

Your Device ID Card

Your **permanent ID card** will arrive within a few weeks.

When to Call

Call if you have questions or if you notice any of these symptoms after a pacemaker placement or generator change:

- Redness, swelling, tenderness, warmth, or drainage at the wound
- Fever over 101.4°F or chills
- Dizziness, palpitations, fainting, lightheadedness
- Fatigue, persistent hiccups
- Pale or bluish/gray skin tone

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit www.uwhealth.org/.

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Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 9/2025 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF#8235