

Patient information

Pacemaker insertion

Cardiac team

Introduction

We hope this guide will answer your questions about your pacemaker insertion. Please contact the team if you require further information via the contact details at the end of this leaflet.

What is a pacemaker?

A pacemaker is a small device with two parts: a small pacemaker box which contains the battery and one or more electrical leads. A pacemaker battery lasts on average 7 to 10 years.

The leads are passed through a vein in your shoulder area and into your heart. These are then attached to a box which is placed under the skin on your chest. The pacemaker sends out electrical impulses into your heart muscle to help it beat at a normal rate.

Why do I need a pacemaker?

Pacemakers are recommended for people who have a slow or a fast heart rate.

How safe is a pacemaker procedure?

As with any medical procedure, some risks are associated.

The decision to perform the pacemaker implantation will only have been made when it is felt that the benefits of implanting the device outweigh the risks involved. Your doctor will explain the possible risks and answer any questions you or your family may have.

What happens before my procedure?

You will be invited for a pre-assessment in the 14 days before your appointment.

You will have some swabs taken and a blood test, an electrocardiogram (ECG) (a simple test that can be used to check your heart's rhythm and electrical activity) will be performed and your general health will be assessed and documented.

Medication advice will be given in preparation for your procedure.

You will be given information about the risks of the procedure

This is also an opportunity for you to ask any questions you may have.

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Women between the ages of 12 and 55 years

The procedure needs to be performed during the first 10 days of your menstrual cycle. If you think you may be pregnant, please tell your doctor. Please contact the team for advice.

Preparing for your procedure

Eating and drinking

If you have a morning appointment:

- You may have a light breakfast e.g. tea and toast or cereal by 6am.
- You may then only drink water until your appointment time.

If you have an afternoon appointment:

- You may have breakfast as usual and then a snack e.g. tea and a biscuit or sandwich before 11am. You may then only drink water until your appointment time.

Getting to us

Directions

The Cath Lab is on the lower ground floor, next to the Alexandra Day Surgery Unit (ADSU). We are in the Blue Zone.

Please arrange to be dropped off and collected from the maternity drop off. You can access this from entrance B, from Hayden's Roundabout.

When should I arrive?

Please arrive at your appointment time and not before.

If you have a morning appointment, please expect to be in the department for most of the morning. If you have an afternoon appointment, please expect to be in the department for most of the afternoon. There is preparation time before the procedure and recovery time afterwards.

The day of the procedure

The procedure is usually carried out as a day case. Whilst you may make your own way to the hospital, you need to arrange for somebody to accompany you home and stay with you overnight.

You will be greeted by the team and taken to your bed on the day ward. There will be a short checklist to go through. You will be seen by the doctor who will examine you, check that you are happy to go ahead and ask you to sign a consent form for the procedure.

There may be some waiting before your procedure and the theatre environment can seem cold to some. It is suggested you bring something to read and a warm dressing gown or top to wear over your hospital gown.

The procedure

A member of staff will accompany you when it is time for the procedure. The room will have a lot of specialist equipment and the staff will be wearing theatre clothing. The room will be air conditioned and it will feel cooler.

You will be awake for the procedure as it is carried out using local anaesthetic. The cardiologist will guide the lead(s) into your heart using X-ray equipment.

You may be aware of palpitations in your chest, which is normal. When it is in the correct position, the lead will be connected to the pacemaker and then fitted into a small 'pocket' under the skin. Your skin will be closed with stitches or glue and you will be advised about how to care for this before you are discharged.

After the procedure

You will return back to your bed where you will be monitored closely by the nursing team.

Your blood pressure will be checked regularly. You will be able to eat and drink normally.

You will be given a sling to wear, as you should not use your affected arm for a period after the procedure – you will be given specific advice about this. You may have a chest X-ray during the recovery period.

The cardiac physiologist will see you during your recovery and may give you a remote monitoring device to take home. They will explain how to use this. This will allow your device to be monitored from home rather than attending the pacing clinic.

You may stay for up to four hours so that your first pacing check can be completed before you go home. Otherwise, you will be seen in clinic the next day to check your pacemaker, or you may have your pacemaker checked remotely through the monitoring device.

You will need somebody to stay at home with you overnight on the day of the procedure.

You may have stitches that are dissolvable. If your stitches are not dissolvable, they will need to be removed in seven to 10 days by a nurse at your GP surgery.

More detailed information will be given to you at your pre-assessment appointment and on the day of your procedure.

Can I drive after my procedure?

You are advised not to drive yourself home and the cardiologist will advise you how long you should not drive for in the weeks after your procedure.

Can someone stay with me in hospital?

You may be accompanied by one responsible adult to your procedure.

How soon can I return to work?

Please discuss how soon you can return to work with your Consultant as it varies depending on your procedure and the work that you do.

Contacting the team

If you have any further questions, please contact the Cardiac Angiography Suite on:

Telephone: 01279 827814 or 01279 827913

Office hours: Monday to Friday, 8am to 4pm

There is an answerphone available outside of these hours. Please leave a message and a member of the team will contact you.

If you would like to give feedback on your care, please contact our patient experience team on paht.pals@nhs.net or 01279 827211.

Please contact the communications team on paht.communications@nhs.net or 01279 827926 if you would like this leaflet in another language or format.