

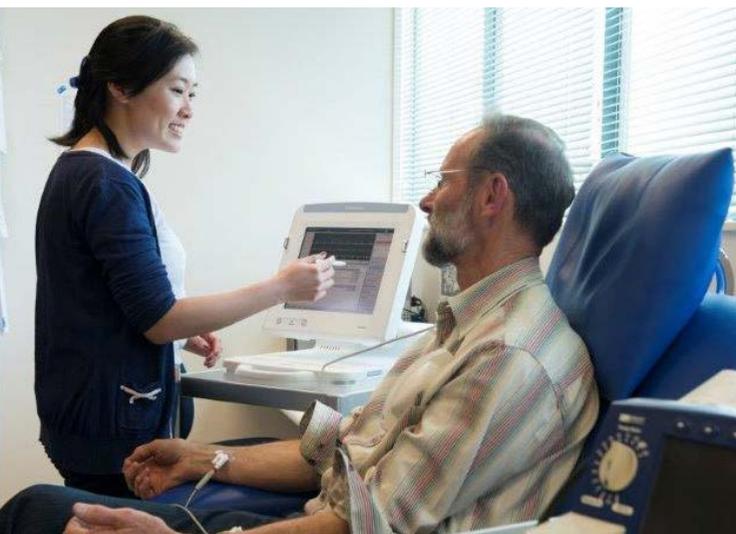
# Getting used to your pacemaker

You will be given an ID card for your pacemaker. It is important to carry this with you at all times, along with a list of your medications. Be prepared to show your ID card if you need to walk through a metal detector (for example at an airport). You may like to consider getting a Medic Alert bracelet.

## Pacemaker clinic appointments

At each pacemaker clinic appointment, your pacemaker will be checked to make sure it is continuing to work properly.

Most batteries last between five and ten years, but it depends on the type of pacemaker and how often it is activated. Replacing the battery involves a local anaesthetic and is usually a very quick procedure. Note that you will not be allowed to drive for two days after a battery replacement.



Remember to tell your dentist, doctor and other health professionals that you have a pacemaker.

Some electrical appliances (such as a cell phone) may interfere with a pacemaker's electronic system. When using a cell phone, keep it at least six inches (15cm) away from the pacemaker.

If a powerful electrical device makes you dizzy, step away from the device. Grounded home electrical devices have little or no effect on pacemakers. This includes microwaves, TVs and garage door openers.

Check the manufacturers' brochure of any devices you would like to use, and ask the staff at your pacemaker clinic about anything you are unsure about.

Talk to your doctor about things you may need to avoid, such as:

- Magnetic bracelets, mattresses and chairs
- Electrolysis for hair removal
- Electric arc welders
- Close proximity to high power radar or electrical installations

To find out more and to sign up to our HeartHelp e-newsletter for people living with heart disease, visit [www.hearthelp.org.nz](http://www.hearthelp.org.nz)



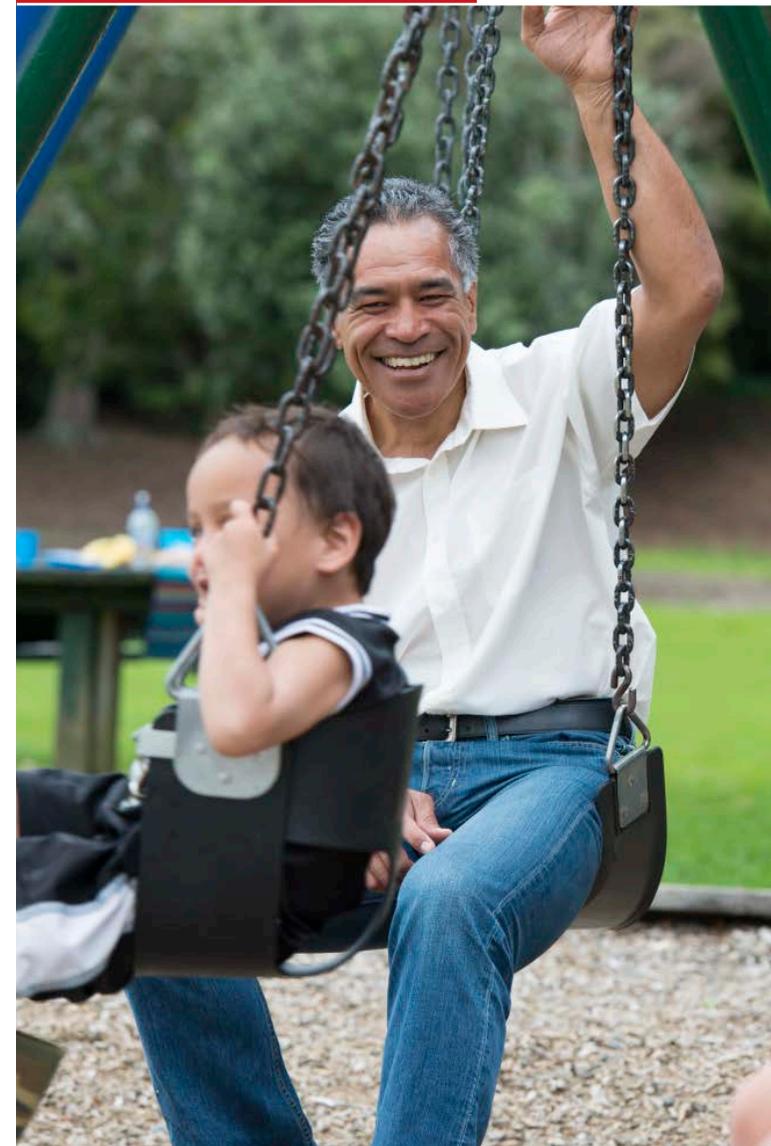
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# Pacemaker



# You and your pacemaker

Your heart beats regularly and at different rates depending on your body's needs. Sometimes your heart may beat too slowly or at an irregular rate.

A pacemaker can sometimes be used to correct slow or irregular heartbeats called arrhythmias. These arrhythmias may cause you to feel light-headed, breathless or even experience black-outs.

Arrhythmias can be caused by:

- heart disease
- damage to the heart's electrical conducting system
- congenital heart disease.

The pacemaker is made up of a long-lasting battery and an electronic circuit in a metal case that sits under your skin. This produces an electrical impulse, which is sent directly to the heart muscle by one or two leads. When the impulse reaches the heart muscle, it causes the heart to contract or beat. This can prevent symptoms like black-outs.

When your heart is beating normally, the pacemaker will not be activated. It only activates when your heart rate is too slow.

There are several types of pacemakers available. Together with your doctor you will discuss the options and decide which will work best for you.

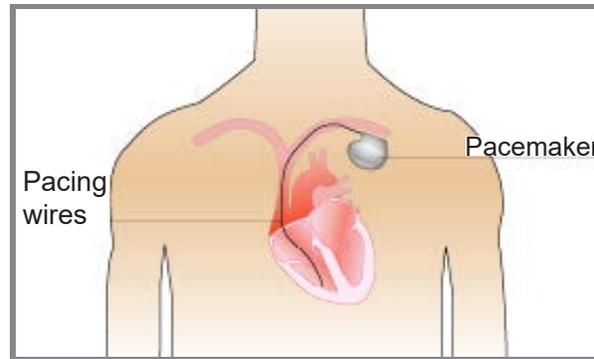
A pacemaker is small enough to sit in the palm of your hand



## Pacemaker procedure

Before the procedure starts, you may be given a light sedative to help you relax. The doctor will begin by injecting local anaesthetic to numb the area where the pacemaker will be implanted.

The pacemaker leads are inserted into a vein below your collarbone and passed along this vein into your heart. The leads are then attached to the inside of the heart wall.



The leads are tested and connected to the pacemaker. The pacemaker is then implanted under your skin, below your left or right shoulder. The procedure usually takes about one hour, although this can vary. You will stay in hospital for a day or overnight.

Your cardiologist or cardiac physiologist will then check and program your pacemaker to best suit your needs.

After your procedure, you may experience some discomfort and bruising around your pacemaker site. Discomfort can be relieved with regular paracetamol.

## Before you leave hospital

Together with your doctor, nurse or other health professional you will discuss how to care for the pacemaker site, including keeping it clean and dry. You will also talk about care and maintenance of your pacemaker.

Contact your doctor immediately if you have:

- symptoms similar to those prior to pacemaker implantation
- hiccupping or twitching in your chest area
- a racing heart
- redness, pain, swelling and / or discharge from around the pacemaker site.

## Once you get home

Over the next four to six weeks you will be able to slowly build up to your normal living activities:

- After two weeks you will be allowed to drive again
- After four to six weeks you will be able to start lifting heavier items and lifting your arm above shoulder-height

It takes a few weeks for the pacemaker wires to become fully secure and for the discomfort to go away.