

Patient Information

Having a pacemaker fitted at Basildon Hospital Cardiac Department

You have been referred to Basildon Hospital Cardiac Department to have a pacemaker fitted. This leaflet describes the procedure, so that you know what to expect. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to ask.

What is a pacemaker?

The heart has its own natural pacemaker that sets its rhythm. When this natural pacemaker is not working properly, an artificial pacemaker can be fitted to regulate your heartbeat. The operation to insert the pacemaker will be performed under local anaesthetic. You will be able to go home approximately five hours after the operation.

What happens before the procedure?

- A date will be arranged for you to have a pre-admission assessment. This will take place Basildon Hospital Cardiac Department. A nurse will take some details to make sure you are well enough to have a pacemaker fitted. Your blood pressure, ECG, weight and pulse will be checked.
- If you have any special needs or requirements, please tell the nurse during your assessment appointment.
- You will need to arrange for somebody to bring you to the hospital and collect you by car or taxi on the day of your procedure. You will not be able to drive yourself. You will not be able to travel by public transport.
- Unless you need someone to stay to interpret or assist with special needs, we ask that relatives or friends return to collect you when you are ready to go home.
- If you have no access to transport you should inform the pre-assessment nurse, who will arrange transport for you if they consider it to be medically necessary.

On the day of your procedure, please remember to bring with you:

- All your medication, in its original container
- Something to read or a personal stereo
- Overnight bag with pyjamas/night dress, dressing gown, slippers and toiletries (in case you need to stay)

- For security reasons, please do not bring jewellery, large amounts of money, mobile phones or anything of great value to you. The hospital regrets that it cannot accept responsibility for loss or damage to property belonging to patients.
- Please do not wear jewellery, makeup or nail varnish. Your wedding ring may be left on if you wish and we will cover it with tape.
- Have a light breakfast at 7am on the day of your procedure. Thereafter only drink water until after your procedure.

Should I take my normal medication?

The nurse at pre-assessment clinic will discuss with you at your clinic appointment which medications need to be taken on the day of your procedure.

If you are diabetic

The nurse will advise you of what medications should be taken on the day of the procedure.

What happens during the procedure?

- You will be shown to your bed. Every effort will be made to make sure that your privacy and dignity is respected during your stay.
- You will be fitted with a wristband with your details on. This is so that staff can identify you correctly and give you the right care. It is important that you do not remove it until you go home.
- The procedure will be explained to you, including any possible complications. Please let us know if you have had any allergic reactions in the past, or if you are or think you might be, pregnant. If you have any questions, please ask. You will be asked to sign a consent form.
- You will be asked to remove your clothing, and will be given a gown to wear.
- A nurse will check your blood pressure, pulse, temperature and oxygen levels. You will be given an antibiotic tablet to prevent infection.

- A small sample of blood may be taken to make sure it is not too thin.
- A small tube (cannula) will be inserted into a vein in your arm, so that you can be given sedation and other drugs intravenously.
- You will be asked to remove any dentures just before the procedure. Please tell us if you have any capped or loose teeth.
- You will be taken to the procedure room for your procedure.
- You will be given a local anaesthetic and possibly a mild sedative.
- You will be awake throughout the procedure.
- The nurse will then clean your chest area with an antiseptic solution.
- You will be attached to a heart monitor. This is so that we can monitor your heart rate. Your chest will be cleaned with antiseptic solution again and covered in sterile drapes.

Having a Pacemaker Fitted

- Most pacemakers are implanted by making a small cut (5 -10cm), in the upper chest, just below the collar bone, usually on the left side.
- An x-ray machine will be positioned above you and may be moved around when the pacemaker is being fitted.
- You will need to lay flat with one pillow for the operation. You will be asked to lie as still as possible.
- A lead(s) is then inserted into a vein. The tip of the lead is advanced until it is inside the heart. The other end is connected to the pacemaker box, which is placed under the skin.
- The wound will be stitched and a dressing applied.

What happens after the procedure?

You may need to rest in bed, in a sitting position for a few hours after the operation. You will need to have a chest x-ray and have your pacemaker checked before you go home.

You will be told about any changes to your medication and how to care for your wound before going home.

Before you leave the hospital your new pacemaker will be checked and you will be given a **CARDIAC PACEMAKER IDENTIFICATION CARD** which you should carry with you at all times.

What happens when I leave hospital?

You will need to be collected by car. Do not use public transport.

DO NOT DRIVE YOURSELF HOME AFTER YOUR PROCEDURE.

You should have someone stay with you for the first 24 hours after your operation. You must rest for the remainder of the day on a couch or bed.

Taking care of your wound

It is common to have some discomfort around the site of the wound. Pain relief such as Paracetamol may be taken to relieve this.

You should avoid wearing tight clothing over the pacemaker site. Women may find that a soft pad placed under their bra strap will help to reduce any skin irritation.

A waterproof dressing will be sprayed on your wound before you leave hospital – this will gradually dissolve over the next week or two.

You must not have a shower or bath for 48 hours as the wound needs to be kept clean and dry. After this time you may bath or shower as normal, taking care around your wound until it is healed.

Some bruising is quite normal. Please contact your GP if your wound is oozing, bleeding or becomes red and inflamed.

Returning to normal activity

You should not raise your arm above shoulder level for the first week.

Do not play any sports such as rugby, swimming, tennis or golf for at least one month.

You should not use the affected arm for lifting or carrying heavy shopping for six weeks.

Once the wound is healed a normal lifestyle can be resumed.

You may resume sexual activity as soon as you feel fit. You should avoid any position that will put pressure on the affected arm/shoulder for the first four weeks.

We aim to provide high standards of care and patient satisfaction at all times. If you are not happy with the standard of care, attention or the attitude of staff at any point during your stay in hospital, please bring this to the attention of staff before you leave.

Please ask to speak to a senior member of staff - either the Senior Sister in charge or the Matron.

We have Quality Assurance systems in place to provide consistent quality standards and these are audited against national profiles within the NHS. We aim to maintain these standards at all times.

Our services and standards are audited against NICE (National Institute of Clinical Excellence) and CNST (Clinical Negligence Schemes for Trusts) regulations, two of the leading organisations to monitor standards of care and practice.

We have a legal requirement under Health & Safety law and Quality Care Commission to maintain safe standards at all times and protect the public. All clinical incidents, accidents and errors are reported through the Risk Management

systems in place. All such incidents are thoroughly investigated and recommendations made to improve standards of care.

We have strict guidelines and procedures in place to reduce the risk of hospital acquired infection.

We would welcome your comments, suggestions and concerns as you have a right to be provided with a response and an answer to any questions you may have regarding your care and treatment.

All staff have to undertake annual mandatory training and professional development is supported. They also have regular appraisals, where development and educational needs are identified.

If you are not happy with the way your concerns, complaints or questions are dealt with, please ask to speak to one of the senior nurses in charge. Alternatively, you may take your complaint to the hospital PALS office.

We hope your procedure goes well and wish you a speedy recovery.

Returning to work

You should notify medical staff at your workplace that you have had a pacemaker fitted.

Driving

You must notify the DVLA that you have had a pacemaker. The DVLA recommends that you do not drive for at least one week, or until after your pacemaker is checked.

A one month follow up appointment will be arranged for you in the cardiology department. This check takes approximately 15 minutes, to monitor the pacemaker function and check the battery. You will also have the opportunity to ask any questions.

Are there any side effects or possible complications?

Pacemaker insertion is a safe procedure. Complications may include:

- Infection
- Bleeding
- Bruising
- Lead displacement

Living with your Pacemaker

How long will my pacemaker last?

The life of pacemaker batteries varies depending on how much they are used. Regular attendance at the pacemaker clinic will allow us to predict when the battery will need replacing.

Battery replacement is a simple procedure involving a short stay in hospital. The operation is performed under a local anaesthetic and the old pacemaker is removed and replaced with a new pacemaker and battery.

What is my pacemaker identity card for?

You will be given your pacemaker identity card before you leave the hospital. Please remember to carry it with you at all times. Do inform your GP, dentist, physiotherapist or other healthcare professionals who may use electrical appliances to treat you that you have had a pacemaker inserted. The card tells the doctors the type of pacemaker you have and its settings.

Can I travel by air?

You will be able to travel by air but it is advisable to avoid walking through airport screening devices, as the metal in your pacemaker may cause the alarm to go off. It may be necessary to show your pacemaker identity card.

Can electrical equipment affect my pacemaker?

Most electrical items that you encounter will not affect your pacemaker. Today's pacemakers have a built in safety feature which protects them from electrical interference from all common electrical appliances encountered in daily life.

This includes:

- Microwave ovens
- Televisions
- Radios and stereos
- All kitchen equipment
- Hairdryers and shavers
- Vacuum cleaners
- Garden equipment

However if you find yourself feeling dizzy or experience the symptoms you had before your pacemaker was

implanted, then you should turn off the electrical item, or walk away from it.

If symptoms persist then you should contact Basildon Hospital Cardiac Department on 01268 524 900, ext 4525/4536.

If you are working with high current, industrial equipment and powerful magnets, please call us on 01268 524 900, ext 4465, or ask for CTC Pacemaker Clinic.

Who should I contact if I have any questions?

If you need to contact us for advice regarding your pacemaker or care, please call us on 01268 524900, ext 4525/4536, or ask for Basildon Cardiac Department.

Where can I find further information?

British Cardiac Patient Association

15 Abbey Road
Bingham
Notts
NG13 8EE
Tel: 01949 837070
www.bcpa.co.uk

British Heart Foundation

14 Fitzhardinge Street
London W1H 6SH
020 793 50185
Heart Information Line:
0845 070 8070
www.bhf.org.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.
www.nhs.uk

Essex Cardiac and Stroke Network

(details of local support groups in your area)
01206 286627
www.essexcardiacservices.nhs.uk

The Essex Cardiothoracic Centre and Basildon and Thurrock University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

01268 524900
www.basildonandthurrock.nhs.uk

Not to be photocopied

Basildon University Hospital
Nethermayne
Basildon
Essex SS16 5NL
☎ 01268 524900

Minicom
☎ 01268 593190

Patient Advice and
Liaison Service (PALS)
☎ 01268 394440
E pals@btuh.nhs.uk

W www.basildonandthurrock.nhs.uk

The Trust will not tolerate aggression, intimidation or violence directed towards its staff.

This is a smokefree Trust. Smoking is not allowed in any of our hospital buildings or grounds.

This information can be provided in a different language or format (for example, large print or audio version) on request.