

Pacemaker Facts

1. What is the purpose of a pacemaker?

To increase the heart rate or to act as a back-up to prevent the heart rate from dropping too low. Some patients have a pacemaker implanted because they always have a slow heart rate. Some patients have pauses in between heart beats that cause them to be light-headed and a pacemaker can stimulate a heart beat in these pauses to prevent these symptoms.

2. Where is the most common anatomic location of a pacemaker generator?

Anterior left upper chest wall, subcutaneous pocket. Other locations can be right anterior upper chest wall or abdomen, depending on the size of the patient and anatomic limitations.

3. A single chamber pacemaker consists of:

Right ventricular (RV) lead plus a generator. A right atrial (RA) lead is a common addition to allow for AV pacing (dual chamber pacemaker).

4. Hazards patients need to avoid include:

Having an MRI as the heat produced by the leads and generator while having an MRI can cause tissue damage to the heart, veins or chest.

5. What are factors what effect pacemaker recipients from retaining information while in hospital?

Anxiety, depression, short hospitalization duration, environment, anaesthesia or procedural sedation can all affect a patient's ability to retain information, similar to most other procedures. Teaching needs to occur pre-implant as well as post-implant; include friends or family members and be both verbal and written to allow for best retention.

6. What lifestyle changes, if any, occur?

Adjustment to living with a pacemaker, may experience changes in ability to work, fear of dying, change in sexual activity can all occur post implant. Truck drivers and heavy equipment operators will experience changes in their work as they will lose their licenses for 1 week or longer. The patient's identity changes with the implant and a new identity slowly forms.