Care after Placement of Your Pacemaker

Follow these and other instructions given to you by your health care team for your care at home after placement of your pacemaker or biventricular pacemaker.

**Call the OSU Device Clinic at 614-293-8916 or 877-478-2478** if you have questions about these instructions.

Your incision care:

- The pacemaker may bulge slightly under the skin. This is normal and common right after surgery. This will lessen over the next few weeks.

- You may have bruising around the incision, especially if you take blood thinner medicines, called anticoagulants, such as aspirin or warfarin.

- Itching is a normal part of the healing process. Try not to rub or scratch the incision site.

- **Keep your incision clean and dry.**

- **Wash your hands well with warm water and soap for at least 15 seconds** before or after touching your dressing or incision.

- **Check your site each day and call the Device Clinic if you have:**
  - Increased drainage or bleeding at the site
  - An incision that opens
  - Redness, swelling or warmth at the site
  - A pimple that develops at the incision
  - A thread (suture) along the incision
  - A fever greater than 101 degrees F or 38.3 degrees C and do not have a cold or the flu
  - Swelling and color change to the skin of the arm or hand on the device side
  - Abdominal or chest wall thumping or “jumping”

- **For the first 48 hours after surgery:**
  - Leave the dressing on for 48 hours after surgery.
  - You may take a sponge bath. Do **not** shower or bathe until 5 days after your procedure.
  - Wash your hands with soap and water for 15 seconds if you need to touch the dressing.

- **Remove the outer dressing of tape and gauze after 48 hours, on ______________________.**
  - Wash your hands well before and after removing the dressing.
  - **Do not remove** the narrow pieces of tape, called steri-strips, that go across the incision. They support the outer layer of skin while it is healing.
• **After 5 days, on ________________, you may shower or bathe.**
  ‣ **Shower or take a bath, letting the water gently run over the incision. Do not** let the shower water directly hit the incision, and **do not** soak the incision under water in a bath.
  ‣ **Do not** rub or scrub the incision site while the steri-strips are in place.
  ‣ Gently pat the incision site dry with a clean towel. You do not need to put another dressing on the site.
  ‣ Avoid soaking the incision site under water in a bath tub, hot tub or swimming pool until the site is healed, often about 14 days after surgery.

• **Leave the steri-strips in place.** The steri-strips may start to loosen and come off on their own in 5 to 7 days.

• Wash your hands well with soap and water for 15 seconds and then **remove any steri-strips from the incision site that still remain:**
  ‣ **After 10 days, on ________________,**
  ‣ **After 14 days, if you take prednisone, steroids or an immunosuppressant.**

**Activity restrictions for the next: [ ] 7 days [ ] 4 weeks**

• **Do not** lift, push or pull any objects heavier than 10 pounds. A gallon of milk weighs about 8 pounds.

• Use your arms, but **do not** raise your device side arm above shoulder level. You may raise your arms to wash or comb your hair, but avoid raising your elbow above your shoulder on the device side arm.

• No vigorous exercise, such as:
  ‣ Contact sports
  ‣ Golf - you may practice your putt, but **wait 6 weeks after surgery** to do a full golf swing
  ‣ Lifting weights
  ‣ Mowing the lawn
  ‣ Running, jogging or aerobics
  ‣ Shoveling or chopping wood
  ‣ Tennis
  ‣ Vacuuming
  ‣ Washing windows or walls

**Driving restrictions:**

• **Do not** drive for 48 hours after surgery.

• If you have passed out, **do not** drive for 3 months after your last episode. Please call your health care provider, not the Device Clinic, if you have questions about this restriction.
Restarting your medicines:

- **If you take a daily aspirin**, restart it the day after surgery.
- **If you take Coumadin**, restart it the night of your surgery unless directed otherwise by your health care provider.
- **If you take Plavix**, restart it the day after surgery.
- **If you take Pradaxa, Xarelto or Eliquis**, restart it in the evening the day after surgery.
- **If you take Pradaxa, Xarelto or Eliquis and you had a lead removed during surgery**, restart your medicine 48 hours after surgery.
- **If you take other anticoagulants or medicines**, follow the instructions given to you for when to restart each medicine.

Pain relief:

- Take acetaminophen (brand name Tylenol Regular or Extra Strength) to relieve tenderness at the incision site. Follow package instructions for dosage. You may have some discomfort for up to 6 months after surgery.
- **Do not** take ibuprofen (brand names Advil and Motrin) and naproxen (brand name Aleve) unless approved for use by your health care provider.

Call the Device Clinic if you have:

- Dizziness, light-headedness or you pass out
- A very slow heartbeat - 40 beats per minute or slower
- Unusual shortness of breath
- Other signs that concern you

**If you have any of these signs and need medical help right away, call 911.**

**If you are scheduled for surgery or to have a MRI scan, call the Device Clinic at 614-293-8916 or 877-478-2478:**

- We may need to make special arrangements for you before and after surgery. Please call us as soon as your procedure is scheduled.
- Please call the Device Clinic if you are scheduled for a MRI to see if your device is MRI compatible. The MRI scan can damage or reset your pacemaker to a mode that is not safe if the device is not MRI compatible.