



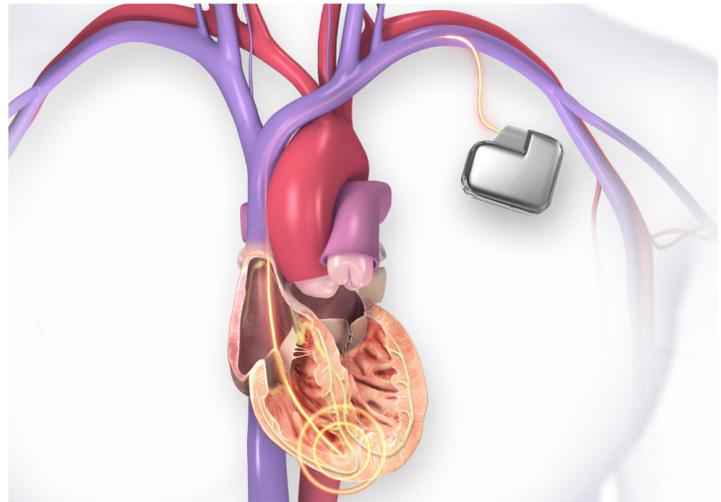
## What Is a Pacemaker?

A pacemaker is a small device that sends electrical impulses to your heart to help control your heartbeat so your body gets enough blood and oxygen.

Traditional pacemakers have three parts:

- Generator
- Wires (leads)
- Sensors

Some newer kinds are wireless.



A traditional pacemaker is implanted under the skin, just under the collarbone.

### Why would I need one?

Your health care professional may recommend a pacemaker because your heart's natural pacemaker isn't working correctly. A pacemaker controls your heart and rhythm.

Problems that may have changed your heart rhythm include:

- Heartbeat that's too slow or too fast
- Irregular heart rhythm
- Partial or complete block in your heart's electrical pathways

### How does it work?

- A pacemaker is a battery-powered unit. It produces electrical impulses to your heart to help it pump correctly.
- A traditional pacemaker is connected to your heart by one or more wires. It's usually implanted under the skin, just under the collarbone. The impulses move through the wires to your heart.
- Wireless pacemakers are smaller than traditional ones. They're placed inside your heart through a catheter (small tube) inserted through one of your veins.
- Pacemakers work only when needed. They go on when your heartbeat is too slow, too fast or irregular.

### How do I adjust to life with my pacemaker?

You'll need to:

- Check your pulse and keep a record of it. Your health care professional will tell you how often to check it.
- Follow up with your health care professional regularly. The frequency of pacemaker checks depends on the type and when it was implanted. In general, checkups are every three to 12 months.
- Take your medication as prescribed.
- Call your health care professional if you:
  - Have trouble breathing
  - Feel faint, blackout or get dizzy
  - Gain weight
  - Have other new or changing symptoms
  - Have leg or ankle swelling
- Follow all medical instructions and keep your appointments.
- Always carry your pacemaker ID card with you.
- Tell other health care professionals including your dentist that you have a pacemaker. Certain types of medical equipment may affect how your pacemaker works.
- Keep power-generating equipment and powerful magnets at least 12 to 24 inches away from your device. This includes magnets found in medical devices, heavy equipment or motors. These items can disrupt your pacemaker.
- Tell airport security you have a pacemaker and show them your pacemaker ID Card.
- If you have a medical alert system or fall detection pendant, contact customer support to see if their product might interfere with your pacemaker.

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### Will household items affect my pacemaker?

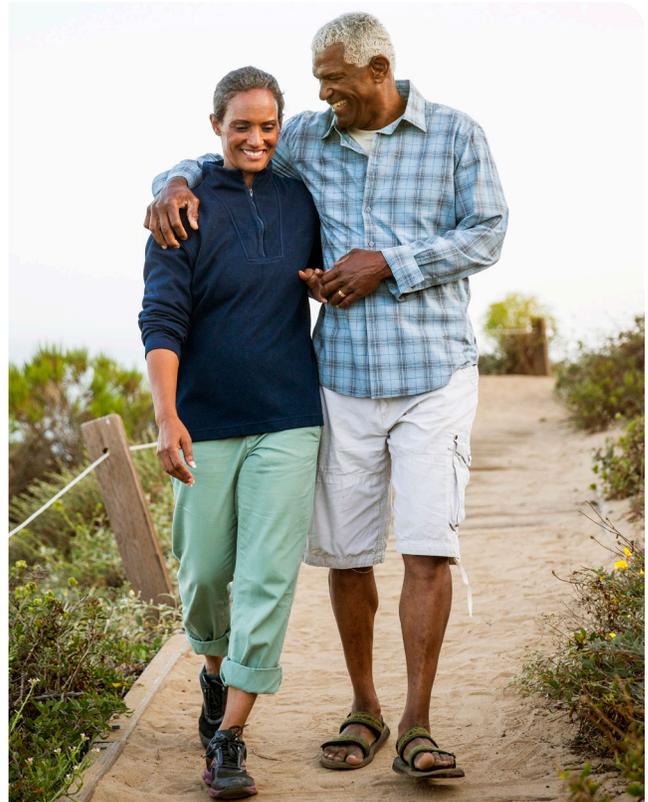
Microwave ovens, hair dryers, TV remote controls and other household appliances won't affect your pacemaker.

You can use a cellphone, but be sure to:

- Hold the phone to the ear on the side of your body opposite your pacemaker or use your speaker phone.
- Keep your phone and earbuds at least 6 inches from your pacemaker. For example, don't carry your phone in your breast pocket over your pacemaker.

### Do I have to take it easy?

- Your health care professional will tell you how much physical activity and what kind is safe for you in the short term.
- It's still important to be physically active. Walking is a simple, low-impact activity.
- Avoid lifting heavy objects, raising your arm above your shoulder and vigorous physical activity. These actions could shift your pacemaker or wires out of place while you're healing.
- You can likely resume sexual activity but use a position that avoids strain on your incision site, arms and chest.



## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit [heart.org](https://www.heart.org) to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at [HeartInsight.org](https://www.heartinsight.org).
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at [heart.org/SupportNetwork](https://www.heart.org/SupportNetwork).

### Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

**How long will my batteries last?**

**When can I take showers and baths?**

### MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit [heart.org/AnswersByHeart](https://www.heart.org/AnswersByHeart) to learn more.