

# Care After the Insertion of a Heart Device

## Pacemaker, Implantable Cardiac Defibrillator, Loop Recorder, or Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy

### You have had a:

- Pacemaker
- Implantable Cardiac Defibrillator (ICD)
- Loop Recorder
- Cardiac Resynchronization Therapy (CRT)

This information sheet tells you how to care for yourself after your heart device.

### Any questions or concerns

1. **Call: 1-855-529-7223 (PACE)**  
**Monday to Friday**  
**8:00 am - 3:00 pm**
2. Call your family doctor.
3. Call HealthLinkBC - 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online to [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)

### When to get help

Call 9-1-1 if you notice any of the following:

- Difficulty breathing or unable to catch your breath.
- Pain in your chest and/or shoulder that is not from your incision.
- Hiccups that do not go away.
- Blood soaking through your bandage.

**Do not drive yourself to the hospital.**

Contact your family doctor right away if:

- You still have stitches after 3 to 4 weeks.
- You notice any bruising, redness, swelling, or coloured liquid coming from the wound.
- You have a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F).
- Your pain gets worse or does not improve with plain acetaminophen (such as Regular Tylenol).

### Follow-up Appointments

Telephone your **family doctor's office** to arrange to see your doctor 1 week after your procedure.

**Family Doctor**  
**Appointment Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone your **heart specialist's office** to arrange to see your specialist 6 weeks after your procedure.

**Heart Specialist**  
**Appointment Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

## Taking care of yourself at home

### For the first 24 hours

- Rest. You will be able to slowly return to your regular activities.

### For the first 2 weeks

- If you need to reach above your shoulder or behind your back, **do not** use the arm on the same side as your heart device.

### For the first 6 weeks

- Ask your doctor if you are not sure if you can do an activity. **Do not** do any activities where you are repeatedly pushing and pulling, swinging, or raising the arm on the same side as your heart device. Examples include raking, sweeping, vacuuming, reaching up over your head, playing ball, tennis, or golf.
- **Do not** lift anything heavy. This means do not lift anything more than 5 kilograms or 10 pounds. Examples include a small suitcase, a bag of groceries, or a small child.

### Taking your Medications

- Take your medications as directed. If you are not sure how to take your medications, talk to your pharmacist.
- Do not stop or change your medications without checking with your family doctor.
- **If you are taking any blood-thinners**, also called anticoagulants such as warfarin (Coumadin) or heparin:

Start taking on this date: \_\_\_\_\_

Check with your family doctor when you need your next blood test.

### Managing your pain

You recover faster when you keep your pain under control. Do not wait until the pain is really bad before you take any medicine.

**Do not** take ibuprofen (such as Motrin, Advil) unless your family doctor has said you can take it.

### For the first 1 to 2 days:

To stay comfortable, take 1 to 2 tablets of plain acetaminophen (such as Regular Tylenol) every 4 to 6 hours. Do not take more than a total of 4000 mg. of acetaminophen in one day.

You may find it helpful to take one of your doses before you go to bed, one again when you get up in the morning, and the remaining doses spread out over the day. Taking these pills, even if you are not having pain at the time, helps prevent pain or keeps the pain from getting worse.

Call your family doctor if your pain does not get any better with this pain medication or your pain gets worse.

### After the first 1 to 2 days:

Take plain acetaminophen (such as Regular Tylenol) only as you needed. Do not take any more than a total of 4000 mg. of acetaminophen in one day.

Call your family doctor if your pain does not get any better with this pain medication or your pain gets worse.

### **Caring for your wound**

- You can take a shower or bath.
- Try to keep your bandage dry. If the bandage falls off, leave it off.
- Gently pat your bandage or the wound dry.
- You can usually remove the outer bandage after 48 hours.
- For the first week, do not soak the inner bandage or wound area.
- After 7 days, gently remove any remaining bandages or tapes.
- If you have stitches they should dissolve on their own.

### **Starting to Drive**

When you can return to driving depends on why you had the procedure. Check with your heart specialist or electrophysiologist to find out when you can drive again.

### **Your heart device Identification Card**

- Always carry your heart device identification card with you.
- Before you leave the hospital, we give you a temporary heart device identification card.
- In about 6 weeks, your permanent heart device identification card is mailed to you by the heart device manufacturer.