

# Permanent Pacemaker (PPM)



## What is a Permanent Pacemaker (PPM)?

A permanent pacemaker (PPM) is a small device placed under the skin in your chest to help your heart beat regularly. It has two main parts:

- A generator box with a battery that creates electrical signals.
- Leads (wires) that carry signals from the generator to your heart, making it beat when needed.

The Pacemaker helps keeps your heartbeat steady and only signals when necessary.

## Why Do I Need a Pacemaker?

Your heart normally beats in a steady rhythm. Sometimes, a problem in the heart's electrical system can make your heart beat too slowly or stop briefly. This can cause:

- Dizziness
- Fainting
- Fatigue
- Shortness of breath

A pacemaker helps keep your heart rate at a safe level, reducing these symptoms and lowering the risk of fainting or falling.

## How to Prepare for a Pacemaker Procedure

- A nurse will call you to schedule your procedure a few weeks in advance.
- Please purchase Sapoderm soap from the chemist and use this to wash with for 5 days before the procedure.
- You will need blood tests and swabs taken to check for infection risk.
- Provide a full list of your medications - some of these may need to be stopped before the procedure.
- Medications:** Follow the instructions given on your booking letter.
- If you have diabetes, do not take your morning insulin or diabetes tablets while fasting. Your blood sugar will be checked at the hospital.
- A hospital staff member will call the day before your procedure to confirm instructions.
- Fasting:** Do not eat after midnight before your procedure. You can drink small sips of water until you arrive at the hospital.
- Bring with you:** Your medications, Medicare Card, a small overnight bag, your phone and charger. Avoid bringing any other valuables.
- You may go home the same day or stay overnight, this will be discussed with you prior to and on admission. Someone **must** drive you home after discharge.

## What Happens During the procedure?

1. You will check into the hospital and change into a gown.
2. The medical team will take your vital signs and insert an IV line.
3. A doctor will explain the procedure, and you will sign a consent form.
4. In the operating room, you will receive an antibiotic and a mild sedative through your IV. You will be awake but relaxed.
5. The area where the pacemaker goes (usually the upper left chest) will be numbed with local anaesthesia.
6. The doctor will make a small cut and insert the leads into a vein, guiding them to the heart.
7. The generator box will be placed under the skin, and the incision will be closed with dissolving stitches and a waterproof dressing.

## What to Expect After the Procedure

- You will stay in a recovery area for a few hours before discharge or an overnight stay.
- A doctor will decide if you can go home the same day.
- If you do go home the same day, you **must** have someone to help you at home.
- Your incision will be covered with a waterproof dressing -- **do not remove it until your follow-up appointment in approximately two weeks.**
- Some bruising, a little bleeding or swelling under the dressing is normal however this should settle.
- The area should feel better each day.
- **No driving for at least two weeks.** If you have a commercial drivers license, discuss restrictions with your doctor.
- Avoid lifting your arm above your shoulder and do not lift heavy objects for **3-4 weeks.**

## Pacemaker Monitoring and Follow-Up

- You may get a **home monitor** or use a **mobile app** to check your pacemaker remotely.
- Your first follow-up appointment will be about **two weeks after surgery.**
- Your pacemaker will be checked using a wireless scanner, and settings may be adjusted.
- Follow-up appointments may happen **every 6-12 months** or through remote monitoring.

## Contact Information

If you have a question about your appointment, please call:

- Cardiac Catheter Lab: 5454 7010
- Cardiology Clinic: 5454 8017

For more information, visit the **Heart Foundation website** at [www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au) and search for "PPM"