

Crib Sheet on Preparing for a Pacemaker:

- 1) **Your left arm and shoulder may never feel quite the same again**, in all likelihood, after the operation. Get used to the idea beforehand.....
- 2) **You will be conscious during the operation**, with enough painkillers to dull pain and discomfort, tho conscious for purposes of feedback, including being engaged in conversation, to keep you mind and brain working, whilst under local anaesthetic observation. (This will also apply to any cardiac stent operation.)
- 3) **You will be warned not to stretch, or otherwise extend, your left arm for several days**, after the pacemaker insertion and testing. Furthermore, be very careful not to over-extend or over-exert, even after the initial healing, as there is a wire residing in a blood vessel, extending to your heart, and, the pacemaker needs to be **securely** encapsulated with healed tissue, situated just below your L) collarbone.
- 4) **Some physical exertions that you may have previously taken for granted are definitely proscribed**, like violent over-reaching, pulling on starter ropes, hauling hard on ropes, using heavy hand-saws and/or chainsaws. Any of these actions may dislodge the pacemaker, and/or wrench the cable in your venous blood vessel.
- 5) **Your L) hand should always be a similar colour to your R)**, never red, or purple, or puffy with pooling blood. Should you have any of these symptoms, especially after (over-) exertion, **seek medical help!**
- 6) **You will often feel the small shocks that prompt your heart to beat regularly**, usually timed to 60 bpm, depending on individual needs. Be reassured, then, that all is well, and, that batteries will last a dozen years or so, before replacement is necessary. **Yearly checkups will monitor pacemaker functions, history, and batteries.**
- 7) **When seated and/or reclining, having your L) arm slightly raised may aid comfort**, plus, following the operation, before full healing has taken place, sleeping on your left side may feel somewhat uncomfortable. This will pass, however, be assured of that.
- 8) **Pillow conformation should always be firm**, and slightly high, to your support head and neck when lying on your L) side. This will avoid scrunching up of your upper arm and shoulder, especially important for those with broader shoulders, **even after healing is complete.**
- 8) **Medication that you may be taking will complement your pacemaker actions, and vice versa.** Beta-blockers will prevent rapid beats, but, you will need to begin exercise cautiously, before you are warmed up, as the blockers will initially have an inhibiting effect on rising pulse. This will then pass as you warm up. Otherwise, when not engaged in periods of exercising, or working physically, avoid sudden bursts of activity that will cause cardiac discomfort.
- 9) **Be very aware that your pacemaker and heart interaction can be damaged by electric shocks, and/or magnetic interference**, possibly fatally, so, be very careful to prevent this ever happening. Note also, that when travelling, you avoid screening by a walk-through metal detector, if you have an internal medical device such as a pacemaker. Likewise, beware of direct MRI scans in hospitals. **Carry your medical device ID at all times.**
- 10) **More information concerning pacemakers, and living with them**, is readily available from hospitals, GPs, and reputable sources online. However, the main keys to long-term survival with a pacemaker are attitude of mind, and, determination to monitor lifestyle.