



Royal Berkshire  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Coming in for a permanent pacemaker

Information and advice  
for patients

Jim Shahi Unit

Tel: 0118 322 6502

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This booklet has been produced by the staff to help answer some of the questions you may have about having your pacemaker inserted. It is only a general guide and may not answer all your questions. Please ask the doctors or nurses if you have any particular questions during your admission

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### What is a pacemaker?

A pacemaker is a small, metal battery-powered device that sends impulses to the heart muscle. It does two things:

1) It analyzes the function of the heart's own electrical system. 2) When necessary, it sends tiny, precisely-timed electrical signals to the heart, to correct certain abnormalities in the heart's electrical system.

### Why do I need a pacemaker?

Most pacemakers are designed to correct bradycardias (a slow heart rate.) If you have an abnormally slow heart rhythm you may have been experiencing weakness, fatigue, light-headedness, dizziness or loss of consciousness. Pacemakers, properly used, can greatly help all of these symptoms.

### About the procedure

The procedure will take place in the Jim Shahi Unit on Level 1, Battle Block at the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The procedure is done using a local anaesthetic – this means that you will be awake during the procedure and the area in which your pacemaker is placed will be numb. You will have intravenous antibiotics before the procedure.

The procedure involves making a small cut - about 2 inches long - just under your left or right collar bone. A wire will be inserted into one of the veins which lead to your heart. This is done using an x-ray. The pacemaker box is then placed under the skin below the collar bone and the cut stitched back up. The procedure usually takes around 90 minutes.

You will then be taken back to the ward where you will be monitored. You will have a chest x-ray and a final pacemaker check before you are allowed to leave hospital, usually on the same day.

In certain cases, you may need to stay in overnight – this will depend on how complex the procedure is and how well you recover.

You cannot drive after the procedure and you should arrange for a responsible adult to take you home and stay with you for 24-hours.

The Jim Shahi Unit is an emergency department and there may be unforeseen delays. Please bring something to occupy your time.

### After the procedure

Your need to arrange to see a nurse at your GP to check/remove the stitches in five days. You will be given a sling to support your left arm which you should wear for the first 24 hours. You should not raise that arm above shoulder height for four weeks.

It is a legal requirement that you must not drive for one week afterwards, however, we advise you not to drive for four weeks.

Further do's and don'ts will be given to you before you go home by the cardiac physiologists. You will then be followed up on a regular basis at our Pacemaker Clinic at the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

### Recognised risks

Complications associated with a pacemaker insertion are rare; however, you should be made aware of the following risks of this procedure:

- Air can get into the lung membrane as a consequence of the insertion of the lead(s) into the vein and this occasionally requires draining but often reduces spontaneously.
- Bruising around the wound may require wound drainage.
- Infection of the wound site, you will be given antibiotics to prevent this.
- The leads can become dislodged, which may mean that you have to have the procedure repeated.

## Useful contacts

Jim Shahi Unit	0118 322 6502
Cardiac Appointments	0118 322 6676
Cardiac Support Nurses	0118 322 6638
Cardiac Care Unit	0118 322 6684
NHS 111:	111
British Heart Foundation:	<a href="http://www.bhf.org.uk">www.bhf.org.uk</a>
West Berks Support Group – ‘Heartbeats’	<a href="http://www.heartbeats-berkshire.co.uk">www.heartbeats-berkshire.co.uk</a>

## Cardiac Fund

The Cardiac Fund was set up with the purpose of providing cardiac services which may not otherwise be available through NHS resources. In order to expand these facilities and to remain up to date with the technological advances, donations are greatly needed and appreciated.

## How to donate

You can donate to the Cardiac Fund U226 in a number of ways (please ensure you quote the fund code U226 when making a donation):

- Cheques: Please make your cheques payable to the ‘Royal Berks Charity Cardiac Fund U226 and post to: Royal Berks Charity, South Block Annexe, RBH London Road, Reading RG1 5AN.
- Cash: If you wish to donate by cash, please bring your donation directly to the Charity Office or leave with Main Reception along with your contact details. **Please do not send cash in the post.**
- Credit and debit card: We accept donations through all major credit and debit cards. Call us on 0118 322 8860 quoting Cardiac Fund U226.
- Online: To donate please visit [www.royalberkshirecharity.co.uk](http://www.royalberkshirecharity.co.uk) and click on the ‘Donate’ button. Please quote Cardiac Fund U226.

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