

Being Active When You Have A Pacemaker

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A pacemaker helps keep your heart beating safely at rest and during exercise. Many people get a pacemaker because they're too short of breath or weak to do activities like housework (or simply walking) because of problems with their heart rhythm. Gradually increasing your level of physical activity can help you return to activities that are important to you. Moderate-to-vigorous exercise, such as aerobic activity and strength training, are safe for people with a pacemaker.

Why bother? Regular physical activity:

- Increases your energy
- Improves your mood and sleep
- Helps keep your mind sharp as you get older and reduces your risk of dementia and Alzheimer's • Lowers your risk of heart disease, stroke, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, several kinds of cancer and weight gain
- Helps you move better and slows the effects of aging



Individuals who have been inactive and start moving get the biggest bang for their buck. Experts now say that any physical activity counts toward better health – even just a few minutes!

Getting Started

Talk with Your Doctor

Physical activity is safe for patients with a pacemaker. Talk with a health care provider from your pacemaker team before beginning a new exercise program.

Gentle Motion

Use of your upper body should be limited to gentle range of motion activities (such as shoulder rolls) for the first 24 hours after implantation.

Start Simple

Light-to-moderate activity, such as walking, can be started within 2 to 3 days after your pacemaker implant. It's easy to walk – all you need is a good pair of shoes!

Active Minutes

Do “activity snacks” throughout your day. Walk to the mailbox. Take the stairs. Dance in the kitchen. Simply sit less and move around more! Every minute counts.

Pacemaker Tips and Caution

To help with healing after pacemaker implantation, avoid moderate-to-vigorous activities using your upper body (such as swimming, bowling, golf and weights) for 4 to 12 weeks. Ask your doctor when it's OK for you to return to these types of activities.

Gradually increase your pace or speed over several days to weeks. Once you have recovered from your pacemaker procedure, you can begin to return to your preferred physical activities.

If you play contact sports, such as hockey or football, ask your health care provider whether it is OK to return to these sports.

Watch for symptoms that the pacemaker might not be working right, particularly in the first 3 months. These include unusual shortness of breath, tiredness, or weakness. If these occur, stop exercise and contact your health care provider.

Aerobic Activity

Aerobic activity increases your heart rate and breathing. Build up to doing at least 150 minutes/week of moderate-intensity activity (such as a brisk walk, light cycling or water exercise). You'll improve your stamina and heart health.

What?

Any rhythmic, continuous activity

How often?

3-5 days a week

How hard?

Fairly light to somewhat hard

How much?

Start w/5-10 mins.
Gradually build up to 20-60 minutes.

Remember: Fit in 10, 15 or 30 minutes whenever you can. It all adds up!

Aerobic Activity Tips and Cautions:

- When starting a new (or returning to a previous) program, begin with light to medium effort. If you monitor your heart rate during exercise, ask your health care provider what heart rate limits are appropriate for you.
- Gradually increase your pace and time spent being active. Start low and go slow!
- Warm up and cool down before and after exercise.

Start where you are. Use what you have. **Do what you can.**

Strength Training

Strength training can help your muscles work better and increases your strength for daily and recreational activities.

What?

Hand weights, resistance bands, weight machines, or your own body; for example, kitchen counter push-ups or chair sit-to-stands.

How often?

2-3 days/week.
*Rest day in between

How hard?

Start with light effort. Build up to medium effort.

How much?

10-15 repetitions (for each major muscle group).
Perform 1-3 times.

Remember: If you need it, get help from an experienced personal trainer. They can teach you the right way to do exercises and how to breathe properly.

Strength Training Cautions

- Slowly increase how much you lift and how often
- Avoid straining or holding your breath when lifting. This increases your blood pressure.

Other Types of Physical Activity

Flexibility

Stretch your muscles 2-3 days/week (or every day) to the point of feeling tightness. Hold for 10-30 seconds (30-60 seconds for older adults). For example, stretch your calves or the back of your thighs.

Yoga, Tai Chi and Pilates

All help balance, flexibility and strength, and are relaxing too!

Just for Fun

Find ways of being active that are just plain fun. Try pickleball or ping pong. Dance. Tend your garden. Play outdoors with your kids or grandkids. Find what makes you smile and do it often.

Take More Steps

Use a smart phone or activity tracker. Count your steps each day for the first few weeks. Slowly build to 2,000 more daily steps than you're doing now. Good job! Then aim for 7,000 - 9,000 steps/day.

More Help

Check out these websites: nhlbi.nih.gov/health-topics/pacemakers

heart.org/en/health-topics/arrhythmia/prevention--treatment-of-arrhythmia/living-with-your-implantable-cardioverter-defibrillator-icd

Go to acsm.org/get-stay-certified/find-a-pro to find an ACSM certified exercise professional near you.