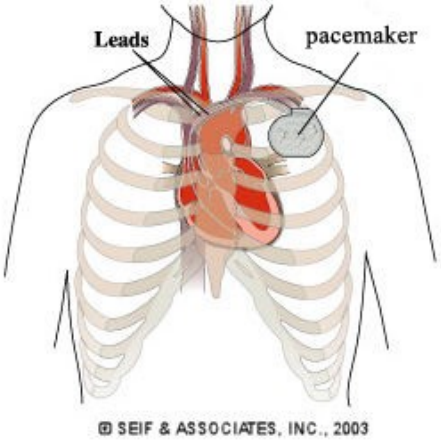
Pacemaker Follow-up

A pacemaker follow-up is done to evaluate the pacemaker and its battery (*pulse generator*). Regular follow-up visits must be done to assess pacemaker function. These visits are determined by how old the pacemaker is or if there are signs of a low battery. Most pacemakers can also sense if your heart has had any abnormal heart beats (*arrhythmias*). Different kinds of tests are used to look at pacemaker function, check for abnormal heart beats, and assess battery life. If the battery energy is low, you may need a new battery.



BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

Your caregiver may do a physical exam to:

- Examine your neck veins for swelling (*engorgement*).
- Feel the skin over the pacemaker for swelling or tenderness.
- Check your skin over the pacemaker for signs of redness or wearing away.
- Make certain the pacemaker has not moved from its original position.

LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT:

- Chest pain.
- Dizziness.
- Fainting (*syncope*).
- Skipped heart beats (*palpitations*).
- Fatigue or low energy.
- Any car accidents, falls, or injuries that have happened. It is very important for your caregiver to know about any injury that has occurred to your chest or back. Injuries near the pacemaker can affect how it functions.
- Any type of "hiccuping" or "jumping" near your upper stomach (*diaphragm*). If this happens, the pacemaker settings may need to be changed. This does not mean your pacemaker is malfunctioning.

PROCEDURES

There are different ways your pacemaker can be checked. These include:

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION

To perform a comprehensive evaluation, your caregiver may use a computer called a programmer. The programmer has a special wand that is placed over the pacemaker. The wand communicates with the pacemaker through a radio wave signal. The signal receives information from the pulse generator. By this method, your caregiver can assess pacemaker sensing, function, and battery life. Your caregiver can also make changes to the pacemaker settings. A comprehensive evaluation helps your caregiver fine-tune your pacemaker.

PACEMAKER MAGNET ASSESSMENT

Your caregiver may perform a magnet test of your pacemaker. This test looks at pacemaker function and battery life. A special magnet is placed over your pacemaker. The magnet causes the pacemaker to function at a fixed rate. The magnet provides some basic testing that can be done at home or in your caregiver’s office.

TRANS-TELEPHONIC MONITORING

Your caregiver can also monitor your pacemaker at home. This is done over the telephone using a trans-telephonic method. A special device called a trans-telephonic transmitter sends information about your pacemaker to your caregiver's office. The information received allows your caregiver to see if the pacemaker is sensing the heartbeats properly, getting a low battery, or pacing abnormally.

YOUR RESULTS

- You will get a copy of your follow-up visit. The information will have the model number, date, current function and remaining battery life.
- Keep your pacemaker card with you at all times. It is important to know:
  - Implant date.
  - Type (NBE code).
  - Brand.
  - Manufacturer.
  - Programmed rate.
  - Generator model.

- If the pacemaker has detected an abnormal heart beat, more testing may be needed.

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