

Biventricular Pacemaker

A word about heart failure

In a normal heart, a signal is sent from the heart's electrical system to the 2 main pumping chambers (ventricles). This causes them to both squeeze (at the same time) which sends blood and oxygen out to your body.

When you have heart failure, your heart no longer pumps the blood as well as it should.

An added problem

Some with heart failure have another problem. The heart's electrical system doesn't send the proper signal. The two ventricles don't pump at the same time. When this happens, less blood is sent out to the body with each beat.

In a healthy heart, this might not be a problem. But, because your heart is already weaker than most, this is an extra burden.

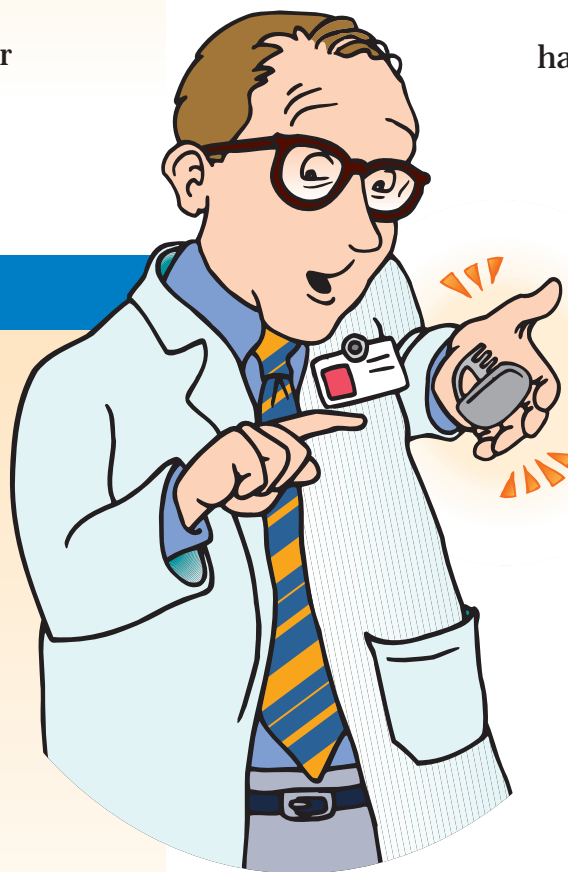
A pacemaker to the rescue

A special kind of pacemaker can help with this problem. The biventricular pacemaker sends tiny timed electrical signals to the ventricles to make both squeeze and relax at the same time. This sends more blood and oxygen out to your body. As a result, your symptoms are less and you feel better.

You go into the hospital to have this pacemaker put in. The surgery will take about 2-3 hours. There will be a small incision. The pacemaker is about the size of a silver dollar and about twice as thick. It is put under the skin in your chest and is connected to your heart with 3 wires. You will most likely need to stay overnight in the hospital afterward.

Before you go home, your pacemaker will be checked to make sure it is working as it should.

And, you will be told about the need for follow-up visits. These are to check the pacemaker to make sure it continues to work as it should.



Biventricular Pacemaker

It's not for everyone

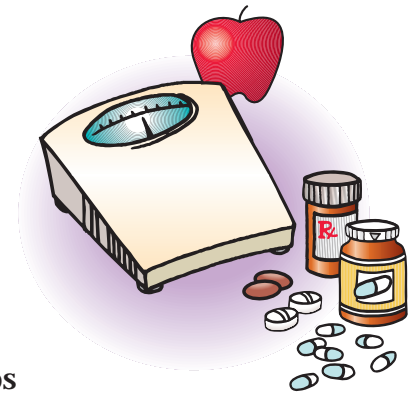
A biventricular pacemaker cannot help everyone with heart failure. It will most likely help those:

- with moderate to severe heart failure whose disease can't be controlled by lifestyle changes or taking medicine alone
- whose ventricles don't beat at the same time
- with an ejection fraction less than 35%

After the pacemaker

Getting this pacemaker does not change how you manage your heart failure. You still need to:

- eat less salt, fat and cholesterol
- take your medicines
- weigh everyday
- get enough rest
- exercise as you can
- reduce your stress
- limit your fluids
- have regular checkups
- not smoke or be around others who are smoking
- lose weight if you weigh more than you should

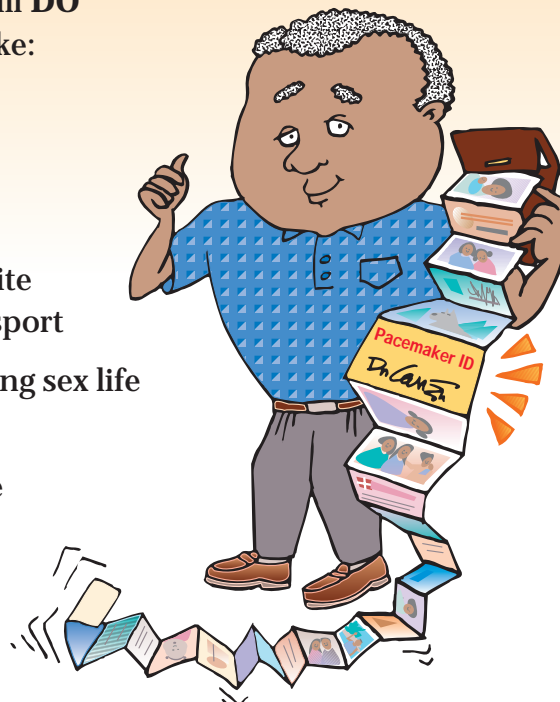


Some DOs and DON'Ts to follow when you have a pacemaker

When your doctor gives you the OK, you can still **DO** everyday things, like:

- shower
- drive a car
- work
- play your favorite (non-contact) sport
- enjoy a rewarding sex life

Do carry an **ID** showing what type of pacemaker you have.



But, there are some **DON'Ts**. You should:

- stay away from strong magnetic fields
- not have an MRI (magnetic resonance imaging)
- avoid scanners in airports or office buildings

Although a biventricular pacemaker won't cure your heart failure, it may make it much easier for you to live your life.