Pacemaker/Implantable Cardiodefibrillator Discharge instructions

Congratulations, You are on the road to recovery!
Now that your doctor will be discharging you from the hospital after your pacemaker or internal defibrillator placement, you may have some questions about how to recover quickly, and live a heart-healthy life.

What should my activity level be?
• Plan to relax your first day at home. It is normal to feel worn-out.
• To promote healing, gentle small movements of the affected arm should be performed for one month. You should not do any aggressive stretching or heavy lifting (over 10 lbs.) during this time as this could affect healing of your incision.
• Do not lift affected arm above your head for 1 month.
• It is common to feel a bit tired or sore after this procedure, so increase your activity level slowly. Walking is one of the easiest ways to enhance your recovery.
• Discuss your exercise plans with your doctor first – he/she may give you special exercise instructions. Avoid activities that could lead to rough contact with your pacemaker or ICD insertion site.

What should I eat?
• It is very important for you to eat a “heart-healthy” diet. A diet low in fat, cholesterol, and sodium can help you lower your cholesterol level, blood pressure and weight.
• If you have any further questions about the cardiac diet or would like to speak with a registered dietitian, feel free to call, 212-__________________.

How do I take care of my dressing and when can I shower?
• Keep the dressing from the hospital on your incision until your follow-up appointment one week after discharge.
• This dressing must be completely dry to allow for healing of the incision. It is recommended that you take sponge baths until your follow-up appointment.
• If you must shower, fully cover your dressing with plastic wrap to keep it dry.

With whom do I follow-up?
• Make an appointment to be checked within 1 week in the EP Clinic, by calling Columbia University Medical Center: 212-305-____________
Weill Cornell Medical Center: 212-746-_______________.
• Be sure to see your own Cardiologist within 2-weeks of discharge. Bring a copy of your discharge instructions and your medications with you to this appointment. Your cardiologist will manage your care long-term.

When can I drive?
• Do not drive until your 1-week follow-up appointment.
• At this appointment, discuss driving with your cardiologist. He/she will give you a recommendation based upon your medical history.

What if I am discharged on the medication Coumadin®?
• Many patients with implantable devices (like Defibrillators) need to be on the medication Coumadin® for a period of time.

If you are being discharged on Coumadin®, please plan to attend the Coumadin® Clinic, an informal information session about this important drug.

What else do I need to know about my pacemaker or Defibrillator?
• Do not carry a cellular phone in a pocket or on a belt within six inches of the pacer or ICD as this can affect the operation of the unit.
• Hold the cell phone on the opposite ear as the ICD or pacemaker insertion site.
• Do not walk through airport security systems as these devices can detect the metal in your pacemaker or ICD and possibly alarm.
• Keep your pacer/ICD ID card with you at all times and ask security to clear you with a hand search only. Do not let security use a hand-held wand.
• Avoid passing through metal detectors (for example in shopping malls and schools). If you must pass through, walk quickly through. These detectors can interfere with the pacer and ICD function.
• Hold hand-held electrical devices at least six inches away from the ICD to reduce chance of interference.
• Do not touch the spark plug or distributor on running car or lawn mower - turn engine off first.
• Avoid gas-powered appliances or tools such as chain saws that can do harm if you become dizzy or receive a shock while operating.
• Avoid holding magnets near your ICD.

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MRI’s can affect ICD and pacemaker function, and should be avoided for life.
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What should I do if I feel a shock? (this applies only to those with Defibrillators)
If you receive one shock, call your cardiologist.
For two or more shocks, call 911.

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It is recommended that you carry a copy of your Pacemaker/ICD card in your wallet, along with a list of your medications. Also, keep the phone number of your physician and an emergency family contact.

Warning signs of possible heart problems:
It is important to keep your cardiologist updated on any symptoms you may experience that could indicate heart problems. They include, but are not limited to the following:
• Pain or pressure in your chest or shoulder that radiates or is accompanied by sweating, nausea or vomiting.
• A fever of 100.5°F or greater, chills or sweating. Take your temperature nightly until your first follow-up appointment.
• Palpitations in your chest or shortness of breath.
• Bruising or bleeding for no reason.
• Swelling, drainage, redness or bleeding at pacemaker/ICD insertion site.

Call 911 for any chest pain or pressure that does not go away with medication or rest. You should be seen at the nearest emergency room!