

Pacemaker Discharge Information

What is a pacemaker?

Every normal heartbeat starts in a group of special pacemaker cells in the upper right chamber of the heart. These cells send a regular electrical signal that causes the heart to contract (squeeze) and push blood into other parts of the heart and out to the body. When the heart cannot beat regularly because of a problem with the electrical signal or damage to the heart, a pacemaker may be needed. A pacemaker is a small device (machine) that uses wires (called leads) to deliver an electrical signal to the heart, causing the heart to beat and pump blood out to the body. The pacemaker leads are put into one or more chambers of the heart through a large vein in the upper chest. The leads are then connected to the battery operated pacemaker. The pacemaker is then placed under the skin of the chest or upper abdomen. Pacemaker batteries need to be changed about every 5 to 10 years.

How can I take care of myself when I go home?

How long it takes to get better depends on the cause of your abnormal heart rhythm, how well you recover, your overall health, and any complications you may have.

Management

- Your provider will give you a list of your medicines when you leave the hospital.
 - Know your medicines. Know what they look like, how much you should take each time, how often you should take them, and why you take each one.
 - Take your medicines exactly as your provider tells you to.
 - Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse. Include any nonprescription medicines and supplements on the list.
- Ask your provider if you should take aspirin. Low-dose aspirin therapy reduces the risk of stroke for women. For men, aspirin has been found to lower the risk of a first-time heart attack.
- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
 - Treat pain
 - Treat or prevent an infection
 - Help prevent blood clots
 - Control cholesterol levels
 - Reduce fluid build-up and swelling in the body
- To care for your pacemaker insertion site:
 - Keep your incision clean.
 - If you are told to change your dressing on your incision, wash your hands before changing the dressing and after disposing of the dressing.

Appointments

- Follow your provider's instructions for follow-up appointments and routine tests.
- Keep appointments for all routine testing you may need.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.

Diet, Exercise, and Other Lifestyle Changes

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.
- Get plenty of rest while you're recovering. Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids.
- Exercise as your provider recommends.
- Don't smoke. Smoking can worsen poor blood circulation.
- Ask your healthcare provider if there are any foods or medicines you should avoid.
- Lose weight if you need to and keep a healthy weight.
- Find ways to make your life less stressful.
- Follow activity restrictions, such as not driving or operating machinery, as recommended by your healthcare provider or pharmacist, especially if you are taking pain medicines or muscle relaxants.

Call emergency medical services or 911 if you have new or worsening:

- Chest discomfort (pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain) that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back or chest discomfort that goes to your arms, neck, jaw or back
- Trouble breathing
- Weakness, numbness, tingling or pain in your face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of your body

Do not drive yourself if you have any of these symptoms.

Call your healthcare provider if you have new or worsening:

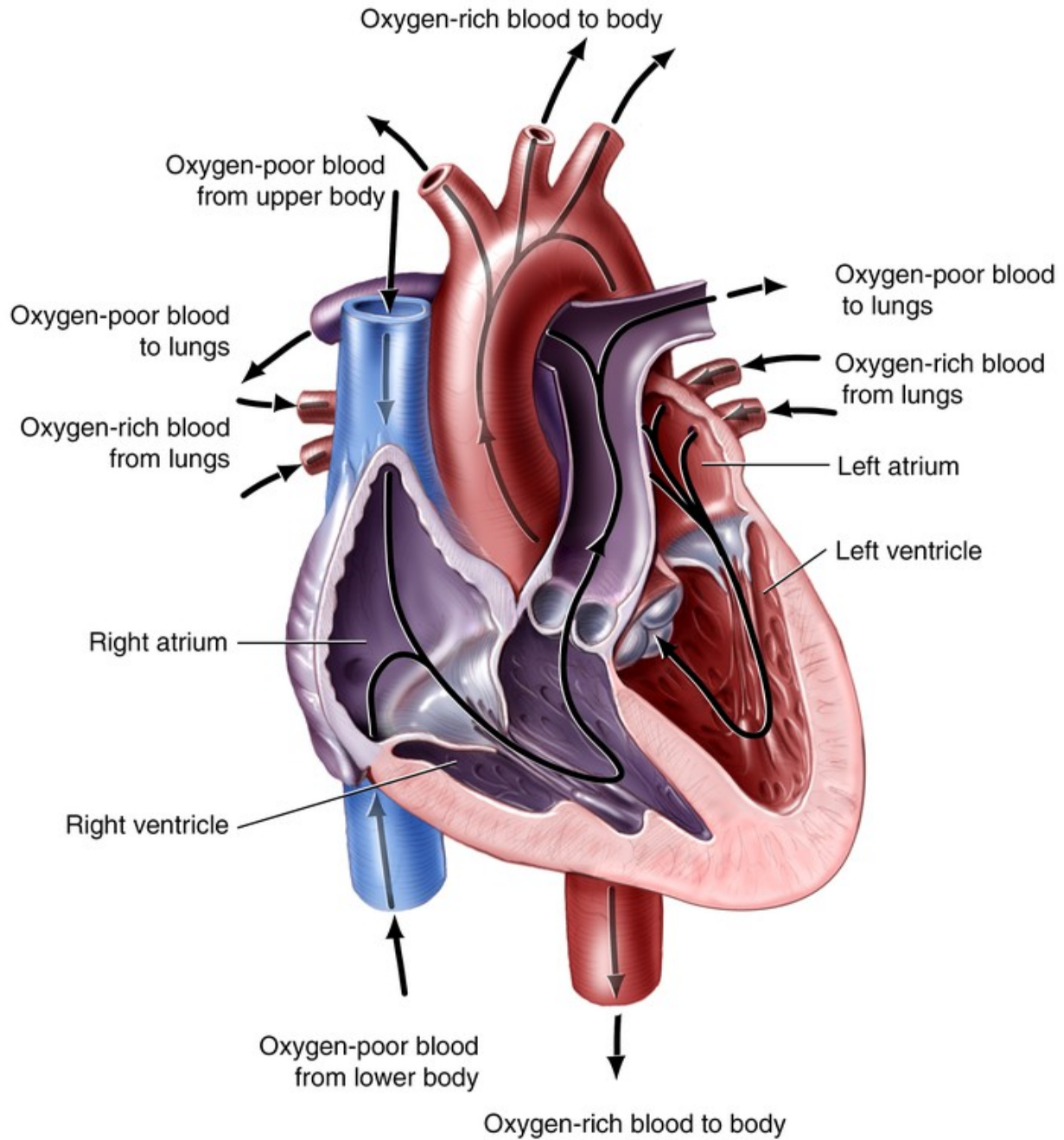
- Dizziness
- Fast, slow, or irregular heartbeat
- Numbness in your arm or hand near the pacemaker insertion site
- Signs of infection around your surgical wound. These include:
 - The area around your wound is more red or painful
 - Your wound area is very warm to touch
 - You have blood, pus, or other fluid coming from the wound area
 - You have a fever higher than 101.5° F (38.6° C)
 - You have chills or muscle aches
- Signs of problems when you are taking a blood thinner, such as:

- Unusual bruising
- Red or black bowel movements
- Cuts that do not stop bleeding

Developed by RelayHealth.

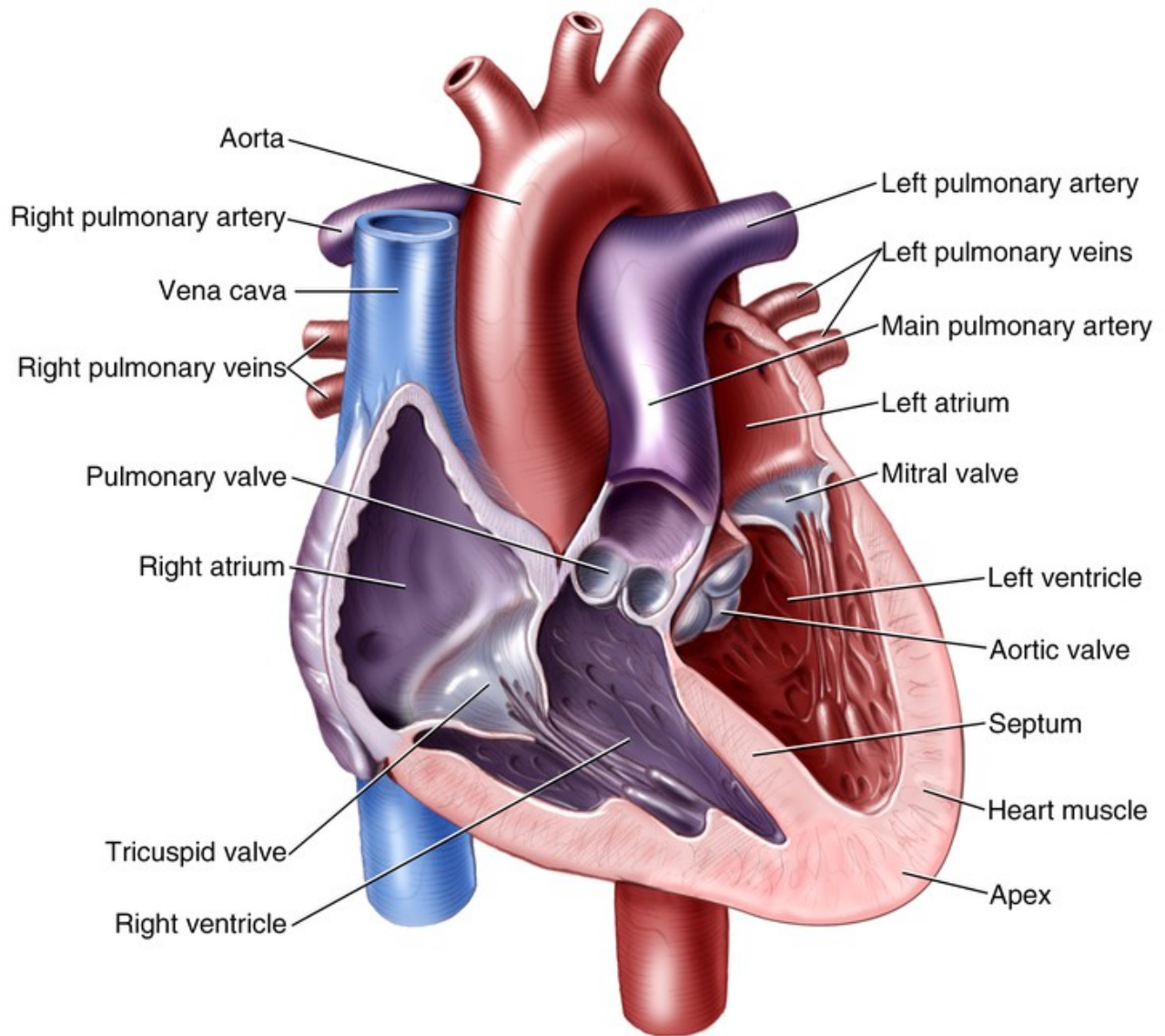
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Blood Flow in Heart



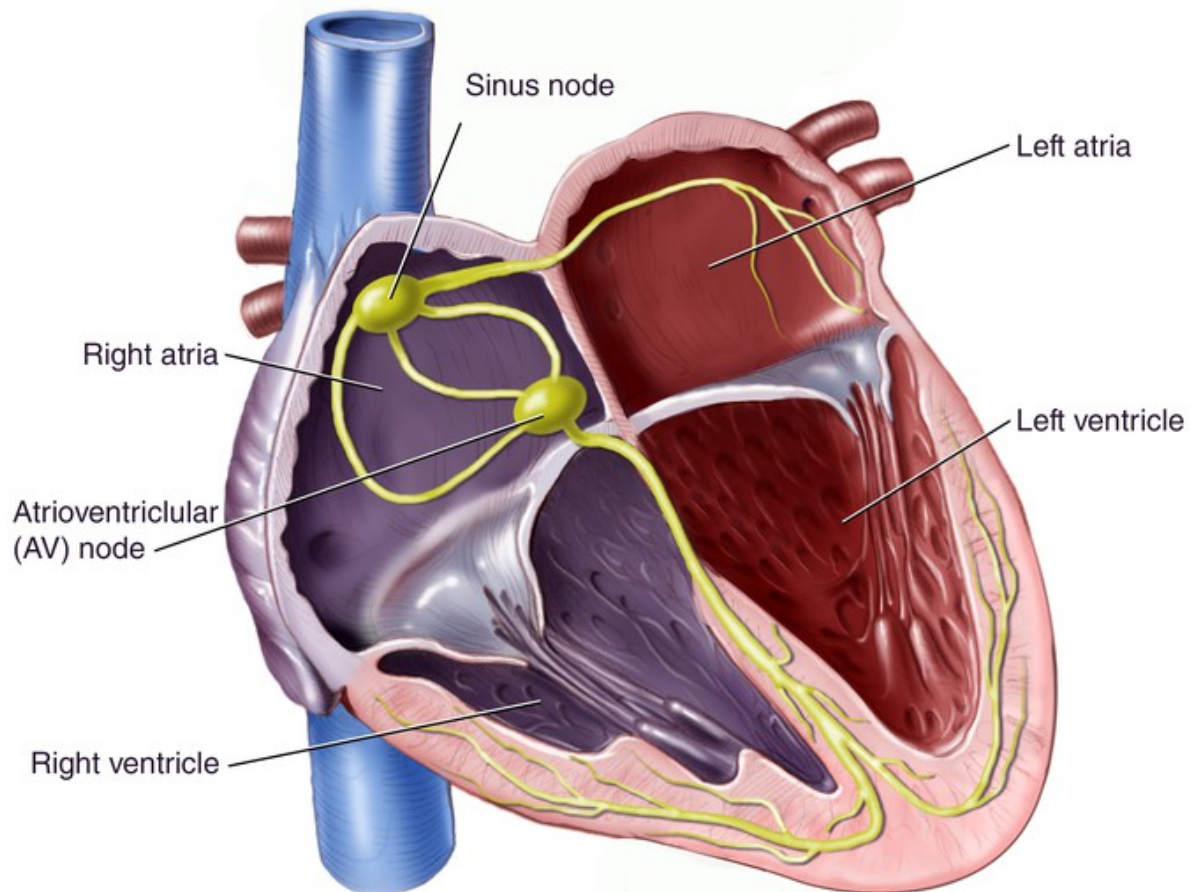
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Heart: Interior View



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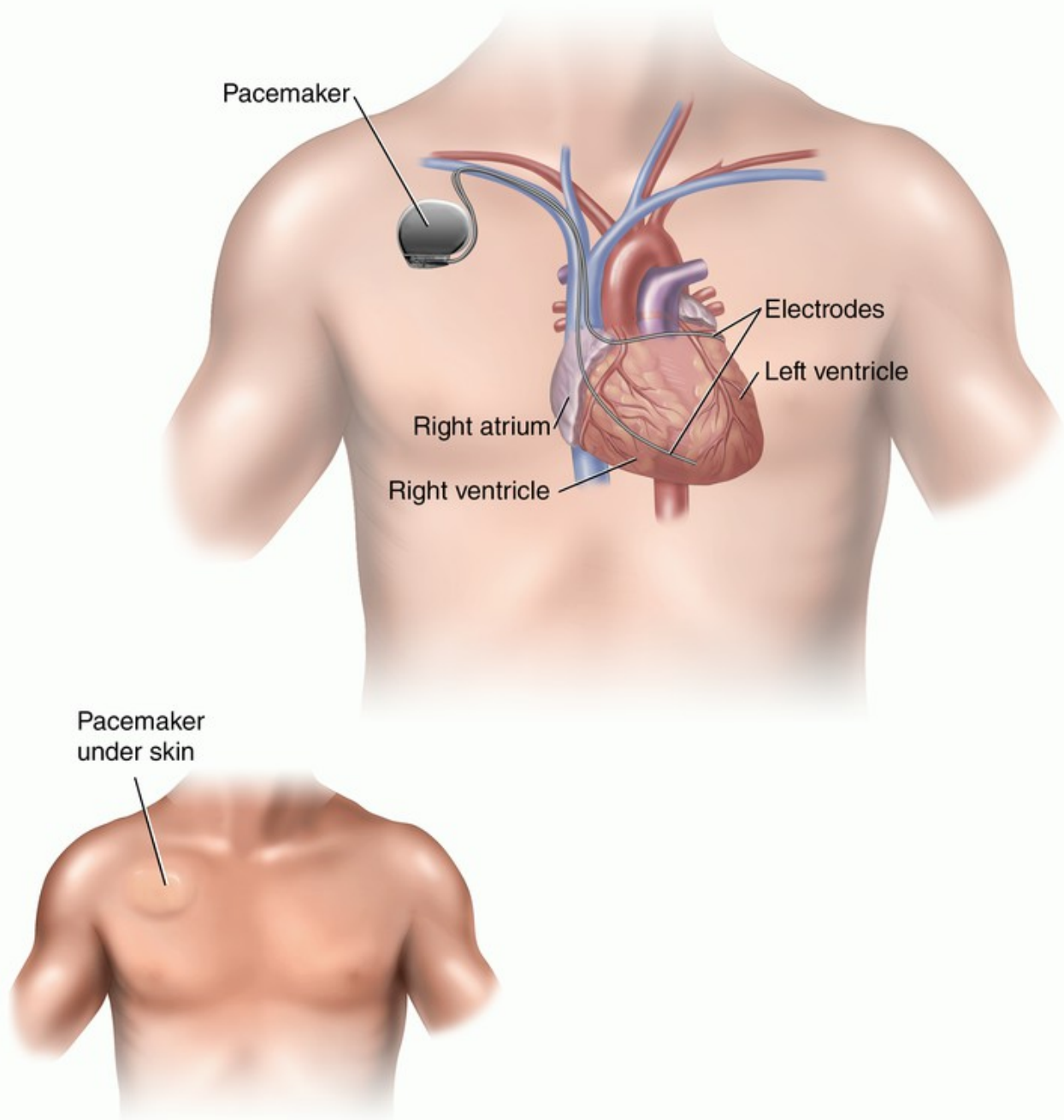
Nodes Responsible for Cardiac Rhythm



The electrical impulse starts in the sinus node. It travels to both atria, causing them to contract, and triggers the AV node. The impulse travels from the AV node, stimulating contraction of the ventricles.

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Pacemaker



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