

## Definition of terms

### IPPM (Implantable permanent pacemaker):

a pacemaker which is implanted under the skin with leads secured in the heart to regulate the heart rhythm.

**Arrhythmia:** when the rhythm of the heart is not regular or in sequence. It can be either too fast or too slow. Some arrhythmias can be lethal if left untreated.

### AICD (Automatic Internal Cardiac Defibrillator):

a device implanted under the skin (as with a permanent pacemaker) which not only has the ability to pace a patient's heart but also 'shock' the heart out of a lethal arrhythmia.

**Cardiac arrest:** is caused by an electrical disturbance within the heart which can cause the heart to not function appropriately. The heart rate/rhythm can be too fast or too slow and no blood is being ejected into the blood stream. When oxygenated blood is unable to reach vital organs (such as the brain, heart, kidneys and lungs) these organs quickly begin to die. Unless treated quickly and effectively this condition can be fatal.

**Rhythm:** the rhythmical beating of the heart to ensure that oxygenated blood is transported around the body.

**Life Saver Monitor:** is an electronic device, positioned by a patient's bedside, which wirelessly downloads information at midnight every night. This information is then assessed by a cardiologist. The information can include the battery life of the pacemaker, how the pacemaker's leads are functioning, if the patient has had any arrhythmias, as well as treatments which may have been initiated.

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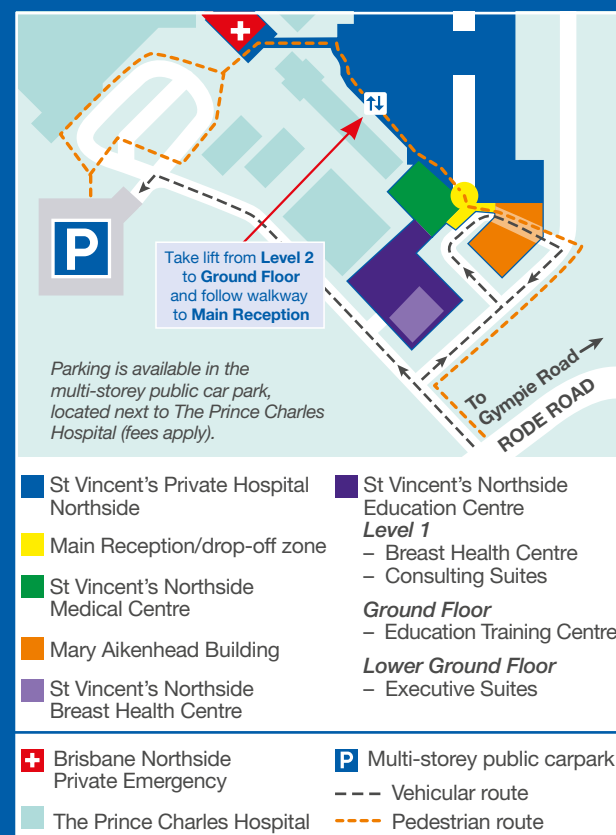
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Developed in consultation with our consumers (October 2016)

UNDER THE STEWARDSHIP OF MARY AIKENHEAD MINISTRIES

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# Discharge information following permanent pacemaker or internal defibrillator implantation



**ST VINCENT'S  
PRIVATE HOSPITAL**  
NORTHSIDE

A FACILITY OF ST VINCENT'S HEALTH AUSTRALIA

The following information is provided as a guide for your recovery. Please follow the instructions provided by your doctor. Prior to your discharge, please ask your nurse for clarification of any instructions you may be unsure about.

### Wound care

- You can shower with the dressing on as it is waterproof.
- When the dressing comes off, wash your wound daily with a mild, non-fragranced soap.
- Use a fresh towel daily to pat dry your wounds.
- Do not use powder or creams on your wounds until they have fully healed.
- If you have pets, avoid them coming into direct contact with your wounds until they have healed.
- If your wound site becomes reddened, hot to touch, has ooze or becomes more painful, seek medical advice.
- Generally, stitches that are under the skin will dissolve naturally and do not need to be removed. However, if you are unsure, ask our staff prior to discharge.
- Please see your GP one week after discharge.

### Wound dressing

At discharge, ask your nurse about when to have the dressing removed. Different consultants have different requirements.

#### Important

If you are feeling faint and unwell or if your defibrillator is firing, **please phone 000 immediately.**

### Patients with a lifesaver monitor

- Remember to take your monitor home with you.
- Ensure you plug the monitor in by your bedside at home.
- Monitor must be plugged into mains power via a power point. Do not leave to run on battery back-up.

### Activity and exercise

#### Important things to remember:

- Allow the device time to wedge and heal into position under your skin.
- Limit arm movement on affected side for **one month**.
- Do not lift your arm above your head for **one month**.
- Activities should be gradually increased.
- Stop any activity immediately if you experience excessive wound pain.
- Slow down if you become short of breath.
- **Do not drive for two weeks** after pacemaker insertion.
- If you have had a cardiac defibrillator inserted after a cardiac arrest, **you cannot drive for six months**.
- At security check points, do not go through the security check gates, you will need to have a physical *pat down* by security staff.

### Cardiac rehabilitation program

This is a program that forms part of your ongoing care. It is an education and exercise program that encourages lifestyle modification and is also a great source of support. The nursing staff will discuss your eligibility to attend and where applicable, will refer you to a service located nearest to you.

This service will contact you. If you haven't heard from them within 14 days of your discharge, please call our Cardiac Rehab Team on 07 **3326 3276**.

### Common side effects

**Tiredness:** is usually your body telling you that you 'did too much yesterday'. Don't be surprised at how exhausting simple activities can be.

**Constipation:** many pain-relieving medications can cause constipation. Ensure that you eat a diet high in fibre and drink plenty of fluids. Walking also assists with relieving constipation.

### Remember

Your family are a great source of strength and support so remember to ask for their assistance. It is important to do things for yourself as you need to take an active role in your recovery.

You will receive a booklet from our staff or the Device Company representative that includes useful information for your recovery.

They will also send you a card for your wallet regarding your specific device. Keep this with you to enable others to identify your device in the case of an emergency.

### Further information

If you have any queries please contact your Specialist or GP.

Visit the Heart Foundation website at **[www.heartfoundation.org.au](http://www.heartfoundation.org.au)** for additional information about coronary artery disease.

Alternatively, you can obtain a copy of the booklet *My Heart My Life* by completing the request form found in the brochure provided by your nurse.