The function of your heart is to keep blood moving through the body. In order to do this, your heart beats many times each minute. Signals from your heart’s electrical system tell your heart when to beat. Sometimes your heart’s electrical system does not work properly. Problems with this electrical system can cause your heart to beat slowly or unevenly. When your heart is slow or uneven, you may feel symptoms like:

- Dizziness
- Lightheadedness
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Confusion
- Fainting spells

These symptoms are most noticeable when you are trying to do something active such as walking or climbing stairs.

A pacemaker is a small electronic device that helps your heart’s electrical system. The pacemaker keeps track of your heartbeat and generates electrical signals that keep your heart beating at the right pace. A pacemaker helps keep your heart from beating too slowly; however, it does not prevent your heart from beating on its own. The pacemaker listens to your heart. When your heart is beating at a normal pace, the pacemaker waits and does nothing. When your heart’s electrical system misses a signal, the pacemaker sends a signal to replace it.

A pacemaker implantation is a simple procedure. It is not open heart surgery. It is a minor procedure performed in the Cath Lab at the hospital. Pacemakers are inserted in the chest wall near the right or left shoulder.

You will be admitted to the hospital the day of (or the day before) the procedure. You cannot have anything to eat or drink after midnight the night before your pacemaker insertion. Your doctor will tell you what medicine you can take.

A chest x-ray, lab work and an EKG will be done when you arrive at the hospital. An intravenous (IV) line will be started. You will be asked to sign a permission slip which gives your doctor your consent to insert the pacemaker. The skin where the pacemaker is implanted will be washed and shaved. Before your procedure begins, you will be given medication to help you relax.

After your pacemaker is implanted, you will stay in the hospital for one or two days to make sure your pacemaker is functioning properly. It is important for you not to lift your arm above
your shoulder on the side where your pacemaker is implanted. You may have some soreness around that area. Pain medication will help if needed.

At home you need to take it easy for a few weeks. Avoid activities like heavy lifting, running or contact sports. Watch your pacemaker insertion site for signs of infection which include fever, redness, swelling, or drainage. If any of these symptoms occur, call your doctor.

Call your doctor immediately if you feel any of the symptoms you felt prior to your pacemaker implantation – dizziness, lightheadedness, fainting spells, shortness of breath and fatigue. It is also important to call your doctor if you experience chest pain, muscle twitching, rapid or pounding heartbeat, and worsening pain in your pacemaker implantation site. The following complications can occur after pacemaker implantation:

- Infection of the pacemaker site
- Pneumothorax – air in the lung cavity
- Irregular heartbeats
- Pacemaker lead displacement
- Pacemaker displacing from chest pacemaker pocket

There are some things that might interfere with your pacemaker including very strong magnets like those used for an MRI, heavy duty electrical equipment, radio transmitting towers, home radios and cellular phones. A running car engine generates an electrical field; therefore, it is important to avoid leaning directly over the open hood of a running car. Computers and microwaves will not interfere with your pacemaker. Pacemakers may set off security devices like those found in airports. It is important to show your ID card to security personnel.

You will visit your doctor or pacemaker clinic several times a year to make sure your pacemaker is working properly. You will receive a pacemaker ID card which contains important information about your pacemaker. You need to carry your ID card with you at all times. It is important to keep your appointments with your doctor or pacemaker clinic and to take the medications prescribed by your doctor.

________________________________  _______________________
Patient’s Signature               Date

________________________________  _______________________
Nurse’s Signature                Date