

Rhythms of Life

PACEMAKERS AND DEFIBRILLATORS
RESTORING RHYTHMS, RENEWING LIVES



www.medtronic.com/rhythms

WINTER 2004-05

DEFIBRILLATOR PATIENT STORY

Sandy and Jay

A Mother and Son's Journey Toward Peace of Mind

An active and spirited 15-year-old, Sandy was leading the snake dance in a school parade in 1975 when she fainted for the first time. That marked the beginning of a journey that took Sandy through a chain of events she and her family only fully understand today.

Initially, Sandy was diagnosed with epilepsy, a diagnosis the young girl experienced as a stigma. In 1982, while expecting her second son, Jay, Sandy received the correct diagnosis – ventricular tachycardia (VT) – during an emergency visit to the hospital prompted by a very fast heart rate. VT is a dangerously fast heart rate that originates in the lower chamber (ventricle) of the heart. Sandy, who is an experienced nurse today, remembers actually feeling relieved about the diagnosis. For the next 18 years, she coped with her episodes of VT by taking medication and periodically receiving medical treatment to disrupt the fast heart rhythms.

Many years later Sandy was presented with yet another challenge. She and husband Jack learned that their son Jay, at age 15, was also diagnosed with VT. Then three years later, sadly and



Sandy and her son, Jay.

Sudden Cardiac Arrest occurs when the heart's ventricles go into a fast, quivering motion instead of a regular heartbeat. The ventricles cannot pump blood to the body, or deliver blood to the brain. Death can result if there is no immediate medical treatment of shocking the heart into a normal heart rhythm.

unexpectedly their youngest son Kevin, died of Sudden Cardiac Arrest at age 15, while jumping on a trampoline. He never exhibited any prior symptoms.

After Kevin's death, Jay continued to experience episodes of VT. Sandy knew he needed persuasion to have an implantable defibrillator implanted. "It was a frightening time trying to convince him to make an adult decision," Sandy shared. At last, on September 12, of that same year, mother and son were wheeled down the hospital hall together to each receive a Medtronic implantable defibrillator. Over the past four years, Sandy

and Jay have been dealing with their grief over losing Kevin while adjusting to life with a device. For Sandy, who at 44 describes herself as "positive, active, and outgoing – the calm in a storm," this has meant a deepening of her faith and complete trust in the technology of her device. "I get comfort knowing my defibrillator is watching over me, ready to provide immediate therapy should I need it," says Sandy.

Jay, on the other hand, at first was angry at God about losing his brother and needing a device. During the past year, Jay has come to accept the device and appreciate its benefits. "Obviously I needed it since the device has kicked in five times."

Avid gardeners, Sandy and Jack enjoy cultivating huge vegetable and flower gardens at the center where Jack built a beautiful fountain in Kevin's memory. As a mother – and as a heart device patient – Sandy feels much more confident at this juncture of their journey: "These devices give Jay and me a lot of freedom, expanding our lifestyle rather than limiting it. We can go forward and live our lives with greater peace of mind."

For more information on living with an implantable defibrillator go to www.medtroniccarelink.com.

Available to patients who currently have Medtronic implantable defibrillators (most models).

Champion of the Heart at 85

At 85, Milton can outrun and outjump most people half his age. In fact, ever since he decided to start a rigorous physical training program in 1987, at the age of 68, Milton has won more than 450 medals. He has been national champion on several occasions, regularly breaking records in his age group in the 50-, 100-, and 200-meter run and the long jump.

While Milton is proud of his athletic achievements and the tremendous shape he is in, the Fredericksburg, Virginia, resident credits his success to more than just exercising regularly. "Having a positive outlook and participating in life, that's what keeps me going. All people should 'keep living' no matter how old they may be or what hurdles they may be facing."

Milton did not always have that positive mindset or enjoy that quality of life. Twenty-three years ago at age 62 he started experiencing episodes of a slow heart rhythm (bradycardia). Milton's heart rate would go down to as low as 40 beats per minute, making him feel tired and weak. He felt very pessimistic about the future. After receiving his first pacemaker in 1980, Milton retired early to the sunny South after 29 years of teaching history in New York. Milton was firmly convinced that he was "disabled and getting old." "I didn't really understand the circumstances then and that a pacemaker is there to help you live better," Milton explained. Milton finally realized that he was



Milton (on right) winning the 200 – meter run at the World Games in St. George, UT, October 4, 2004.

more comfortable living with a pacemaker and that he couldn't "just sit around" any longer. He decided to get back into shape and see if he could run again as he had done as the top sprinter at Northern State Teacher's College in the 1940s.

As a former high school track and cross-country coach, Milton understood that he needed a training and exercise program. After consulting with the University of Arizona sprint coach, Milton followed the prescribed training schedule diligently and found himself in terrific shape within a year. Not only did he slim down, he was also able to reduce 13 medications to four. Feeling energetic and wonderful, Milton signed up for his first Senior Olympics running event in 1989 and has been competing ever since. A teacher and philosopher at heart, Milton wants to inspire others, especially seniors, to live life to the fullest. The media attention he has enjoyed because of his exceptional athletic achievements has helped

him reach a broad audience. "The purpose in life is to do things and stay involved," in Milton's opinion. "There is life after a pacemaker or an operation. If you get a mindset that you want to be well, start exercising, even if it's just walking, and keep participating. Don't worry about dying – worry about living! My positive attitude and the pacemaker are helping me enjoy a wonderful retirement."

Has Your Address, Phone Number, or Doctor Changed?

Medical device manufacturers need your assistance to ensure their records are accurate and current.

If you live in the U.S.A., it is important that you notify your device manufacturer when your address, phone number (or area code) or doctor changes. Your I.D. card will have the name and phone number of your device manufacturer.

For Medtronic devices, our Patient Services phone number is 800-551-5544.

MRIs and Your Medtronic Device



Along with CT scans, x-rays and ultrasounds, MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) are highly effective, advanced diagnostic tests. However, the use of MRI technology has not been considered safe for persons with implantable pacemakers and defibrillators. In this **Question & Answer**, Medtronic provides guidelines on the current use of MRI technology with Medtronic heart devices.

Is it harmful for me to have an MRI?

Medtronic does not consider MRI scans to be safe for patients with implantable pacemakers and defibrillators and does not recommend its use for these patients.

What could actually happen to my heart device during an MRI?

An MRI could change the settings and/or temporarily affect the normal operation of your heart device. It could also cause a life-threatening irregular heart rhythm and/or tissue damage due to heating of the lead wire(s).

For those who prefer a more technical response: The following types of electromagnetic fields produced by MRI equipment may affect the normal operation of your implantable pacemaker and defibrillator. 1) Alternating magnetic fields can introduce conducted current into the lead wire(s) and cause a potentially life-threatening arrhythmia. 2) Radio frequency energy emitted by the equipment can cause heating of the lead tip, potentially damaging tissue around the lead tip that could result in a loss of pacing. 3) Finally, the complex magnetic fields may be strong enough in some MRI machines to change the settings of your heart device to standard settings.

Can I have a partial extremity MRI?

Medtronic does not recommend the use of an MRI scan, even for a partial extremity.

Can I have an MRI if my heart device is programmed off?

Not in any way that would minimize the risks of an MRI as previously described.

Can I have an MRI if my heart device has been removed?

Medtronic does not recommend undergoing an MRI if the lead wire(s) are still implanted. Most risks are still present, including initiating an irregular heart rhythm and/or heating of the lead wire(s) that can cause tissue damage around the lead tip.

What if my doctor strongly recommends an MRI scan?

Please have your doctor contact Medtronic Technical Services for a detailed discussion.

If I had an MRI did this affect my heart device?

There is a possibility that the settings of your heart device may be changed as a result of an MRI. Your doctor can determine if this has occurred.

PACEMAKER PATIENT STORY

My Return to a Full and Active Life

Carrie wrote off the fatigue she was feeling during her senior year in college to "growing up and getting lazy." At 23, she was in excellent physical shape, working out regularly and living a healthy lifestyle. Looking forward to earning a Master's Degree in Fine Arts in Poetry and ultimately becoming a practicing poet, Carrie was shocked to learn during a routine exam that she needed a pacemaker. Now 27, Carrie looks back on how she faced the initial challenges and gradually returned to a full and active life.



Carrie with her dog, Nate.

I felt absolutely invincible at age 23. I was very active, and being a

nationally collegiate cheerleader required a lot of energy, stamina and athletic ability. I ate healthy, worked out regularly and thought I was doing everything right to maintain a healthy lifestyle. During a routine exam, my doctor noticed a low heart rate of around 40 beats per minute and referred me to a cardiologist. I was completely shocked to find out that I had a heart rhythm disturbance called "Sick Sinus Syndrome" and needed a pacemaker to treat it. At first, "Sick Sinus Syndrome" sounded more like the common cold.

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Return to a Full Life

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But I quickly learned that it is caused by an impaired sinus node, the heart's natural pacemaker, resulting in a slow heartbeat (bradycardia). The diagnosis was made on a Monday and the Medtronic pacemaker was implanted the following Friday. The pacemaker helped my heart beat at a normal rhythm and adjusted my heart rate to my activity level.

That first calendar year after my pacemaker implant was my year of panic. I worried about everything! I was afraid to exercise and anxiously tuned into my health. Here I was sitting in the doctor's office with people more than twice my age, undergoing repetitive tests to ensure that this "little round

machine" was working properly for my heart condition. Naturally, I also worried about the outline of the device showing on my petite frame. I had a hard time adjusting to having a pacemaker.

However, as time passed, I found the strength I needed to focus on the positives again. What really helped was my family's support, especially my Dad's practical business perspective – "do what needs to be done" – that I adopted to get me through. My doctors and nurses were wonderful – they reassured me about every little worry I brought to them. Other things that helped get me through this phase included seeing a therapist, writing poetry, and of course, my beloved dog, Nate.

Today, I am pursuing my Master's Degree in Fine Arts in Poetry while

working as a writer. I am back to exercising and enjoying the outdoors.

Having a pacemaker was a test for me. At first it was hard to find comfort, and I was unable to grasp why, at such a young age, I was faced with this life-changing experience. It took time for the pacemaker to feel like it is part of me and it is something for which I am now grateful. I am once again moving forward into the future.

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Rhythms of Life is a publication designed to educate and to share personal experiences of others with pacemakers and defibrillators. The testimonials featured are personal experiences of that individual and do not represent the company's or the medical profession's official recommendations. Therapy results vary by individual. As always, any questions regarding your specific medical device therapy should be directed to your doctor.

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