

*If you have
any questions
or concerns,
please ask
your clinician.*

Understanding Your Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator

Your physician has discussed the need for an implantable cardioverter defibrillator (ICD) with you. It is important for you to understand:

- What an ICD is
- How it can help you
- What follow-up care you need

How it works

The ICD is a device that can protect you against dangerous abnormal heart rhythms by constantly monitoring your heart rhythm. The ICD can detect ventricular tachycardia (VT) or ventricular fibrillation (VF). These 2 heart rhythms can be life-threatening if they are not treated.

The ICD treats these rhythms by pacing or shocking the heart back to a normal rhythm. The ICD can also act as a pacemaker to detect a slow heart rhythm and produce electrical impulses to increase your heart rate. Your physician will program your ICD to best fit your specific needs.

ICD placement

A staff member from the Electrophysiology Lab will call you with day-of surgery instructions 1 business day before your procedure.

To prepare for the procedure:

- Do not eat or drink after midnight before the procedure.
- Remove eyeglasses, contact lenses and all jewelry.

You will have the ICD procedure in the Electrophysiology Lab. The care team will give you medication to help you relax during the procedure. The procedure lasts several hours. Most people can go home the next morning.

Please call the Northwestern Medicine Bluhm Heart Hospital Device Clinic at 312.695.1926 (TTY: 711) to make a wound check visit for 7 to 14 days after your surgery.

After your surgery

At home, you will need time to recover from the surgery. It is important for you to listen to your body and rest when you feel tired. Eat a proper diet. Follow up with your physician for scheduled visits.

Incision care

- Do not shower or get the wound bandage wet until after the wound check visit 7 to 14 days after surgery.
- When your physician tells you it is OK, you can shower and get the incision wet. Let the water, soap and shampoo trickle over the incision. Do not scrub the incision or the area around it. Pat the incision dry.
- Do not take a bath or submerge the incision in water for 6 weeks.
- Do not put any lotions, creams or gel over the incision.
- Do not raise your arm on the same side of your device over your shoulder for the next 6 weeks. You may use this arm for everyday activities.
- The tape strips (Steri-Strips™) over the incision can come off 1 week after your wound check visit.
- Protect your incision from the sun to avoid sunburn and decrease scarring.

Activity guidelines

- Do not drive until your care team gives you instructions about driving at your 1-week follow-up visit. Driving may be allowed after 1 to 6 weeks. This is a topic of concern for most patients. However, it is important to know that you have a heart rhythm that can make you dizzy, faint or even pass out. If you are driving a car when this happens, you could injure yourself or others. The ICD can treat the abnormal heart rhythm, not prevent it from happening.
- Do not raise your arm on the same side of your device over your shoulder for the next 6 weeks. You may use this arm for everyday activities. A sling is not recommended during your recovery time.
- We encourage exercise. It is important to start slowly and then progress as you are able. Rest when you are tired. There are many benefits to a regular exercise program. Talk with your physician to see what options are best for you.
- Do not use exercise machines that require you to move your arms for the next 6 weeks.
- Do not do exercises or activities that could result in blunt blows to the ICD site, such as contact sports.
- Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds (such as groceries, laundry and children) until 6 weeks after surgery.
- You should not do activities involving stretching and/or reaching movements with your affected arm (such as golf, tennis and yoga) for 6 weeks after your surgery.
- Do not go swimming or use whirlpools for 6 weeks and the incision is completely healed to decrease the risk of infection.
- Do not have dental work for 3 months after surgery.

When to call your physician

Call your physician if you have any of these signs of infection:

- A temperature more than 100 degrees F
- Redness, swelling or tenderness at the incision site
- Drainage from the incision site

As noted before, your ICD may try to pace you out of an abnormal rhythm. If it cannot, it will give you a shock to restore your normal rhythm.

If you get a shock and feel fine:

- Sit down and rest for a few minutes.
- Notify us at the Device Clinic when you have time at 312.695.1926 (TTY:711) during regular business hours.

If you get a shock and pass out or do not feel well:

- **Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department.**
- If you go to an emergency department, have them call the Device Clinic at 312.695.1926 for information about your ICD.
- Keep your ICD ID card in your wallet to show to the emergency staff if they ask.

Follow-up care and visits

After your ICD procedure, you will have follow-up visits in the Device Clinic to check that it is working properly. Part of your follow-up involves checking the battery life and function of the ICD.

If you have a MyNM account, you can have your wound checked remotely by sending a photo of the incision to the Device Clinic care team instead of coming in to the clinic. The clinic staff will contact you if a remote MyNM wound check is right for you.

Visits

It is very important that you keep your follow-up visits. The Device Clinic is located at:

675 North Saint Clair Street
19th Floor, Suite 100
Chicago, Illinois
312.695.1926 (TTY: 711)

7 to 14 days after your surgery

You will need to come back to the Device Clinic for a wound check or send a photo through MyNM if appropriate.

Your wound check appointment is on: _____

After this visit, you will have another visit in **3 months**. You will then start remote home monitoring. You will send the Device Clinic care team a remote data transmission every 3 months for the next year. You will have an in person visit in the Device Clinic every 1 to 2 years. At that time, you will also see the electrophysiology nurse practitioner.

Living with your ICD

Magnets and electrical devices

Keep your device at least 6 inches away from all magnetic things. Normal use of properly operating household appliances should not damage your ICD. Microwave ovens and cellphones are safe to use. However, do not carry your cellphone in your shirt pocket over your device. When talking on your cellphone, hold it to your ear on the opposite side of your device.

Using electric arc welders or working on automobile ignition systems also will not damage your ICD. However, they can interfere with your ICD function. Confirm the safety of the items. Individual situations may vary. If in doubt, a consultant can check your home or work area for interference with your device (ask the Device Clinic nurse for details).

You may have X-ray examinations and computed tomography (CT) scans. If you have an order for a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan, please contact the Device Clinic for instructions. Dental equipment is safe with a few exceptions. Tell your dentist about your ICD before you have any dental procedures.

Metal detectors and hand-held wands that are used at airports or federal buildings are magnets. They will not harm your ICD, but they can interfere with the shocking function of the ICD while you are in the magnetic field. Let security know you have an implanted device. It is OK to use the X-ray scanners at the airport, or you can request a pat down screening. The ICD will not set off the metal detector. Carry your ICD ID card with you.

Your device

You have this implanted device: _____

Device company phone number: _____

You should receive a temporary ID card from the device company. You will receive a permanent ID card in the mail 3 to 4 weeks after your procedure. **Carry this ID card with you at all times.**

If you have any specific questions about your device, please contact the device company.

It is important to notify all your physicians that you have an ICD.

If you have any questions or concerns about your ICD or specific tests you need, call the Device Clinic nurse at 312.695.1926 (TTY: 711).