

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

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 is needed

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 is able to 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

You will receive a phone call with day of surgery instructions the 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.

The ICD placement is done in the Electrophysiology Lab. You will be given medication to help you relax during the procedure. The procedure lasts several hours. Most patients are able to go home the next morning.

Please call the Northwestern Memorial Hospital Device Clinic at 312.695.1926, TTY 312.926.6363, to make a wound check appointment 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 appointments.

Incision care

- Do not shower or get the wound bandage wet until after the wound check appointment 7 to 14 days after surgery.
- When you have permission to shower, you may 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 place 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.
- Steri-Strips™ (tape strips) can be removed 1 week after your wound check appointment.
- Protect your incision from the sun to avoid sunburn and decrease scarring.

Activity guidelines

- Driving is not allowed for 1 week to 6 months after your ICD is implanted. 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 on the road. The ICD is able to 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.
- Exercise is encouraged. It is important to start slowly and progress gradually. Be sure to 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.
- Avoid exercise or activity 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 avoid 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.
- Avoid 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 attempt to pace you out of an abnormal rhythm. If unsuccessful it will deliver a shock to restore your normal rhythm.

If you receive 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 312.926.6363, during regular business hours.

If you receive 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.

Follow-up care and appointments

After your ICD is implanted, you will have follow-up appointments in the Device Clinic to ensure 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, your wound check may be done virtually by sending a photo of the incision to your healthcare provider instead of coming in to the clinic. The clinic staff will contact you if a virtual (through MyNM) wound check is right for you.

Appointments

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

675 North Saint Clair Street
19th Floor, Suite 100
Chicago, Illinois
312.695.1926
TTY: 312.926.6363

7 to 14 days after your surgery

You will need to come back to the Device Clinic for a wound check. Your wound check appointment is on: _____

After this visit, you will be seen again in **3 months**. You will then begin remote home monitoring. A remote data transmission will be completed every 3 months for the next year. You will then return to the Device Clinic **once a year for an examination**.

Living with your ICD

Magnets and electrical devices

Keep your device at least 6 inches away from all things magnetic. Normal use of properly operating household appliances should not damage your ICD. Microwave ovens and cell phones are safe to use. However, do not carry your cell phone in your shirt pocket over your device. When talking on your cell phone, 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. They can interfere with your ICD function. Confirm the safety of the indicated items. Individual situations may vary. If in doubt, your home or work area can be checked for interference with your device by consultants (ask the Device Clinic nurse for details).

You may have X-ray examinations and computed tomography (CT) scans. You cannot have a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) test. If you need an MRI, please contact the Device Clinic for the clearance process. Dental equipment is safe with a few exceptions. Notify your dentist about your ICD before any procedure is performed.

Metal detectors at the airport or at federal buildings will not hurt your device, but they may set off an alarm when you pass through them. Hand-held wands should be avoided. You will need to present your device ID card, let security know you have an implanted device, and security will do a hand pat-down.

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 a pacemaker.

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 312.926.6363.