

Inferior Vena Cava Filter Retrieval

The inferior vena cava (IVC) is a large vein in the abdomen that brings blood from the lower part of the body back to the heart. You have an IVC filter that stops blood clots from moving from the lower part of your body to your lungs.

If you have any questions, talk with your physician or nurse.

Your physician may remove the filter when:

- › Your risk for blood clots decreases
- › You start taking anticoagulant (blood thinner) medications

Note, your physician can choose to remove your filter for a reason not listed.

This handout describes:


- › How your physician removes the filter
- › How to prepare for the procedure
- › Follow-up care after the procedure

The physician will remove the IVC filter in the Interventional Radiology (IR) Department. It does not require a hospital stay. **You will spend about 3 hours in the IR department.**

Risks

As with any procedure, there are risks. They include:

- › Infection
- › Bleeding



There is a small chance that the filter moved or changed position. If this happened, the physician may decide it is not safe to remove the filter. If they do not remove it at this time, they may remove it later with different equipment.

Before the procedure

You will schedule the procedure once your primary care physician or physician you see for your blood clots and the IR physician agree the filter can come out.

Day of procedure at home

Most patients have IV medication to relax them during the procedure, so:

- › Do not eat solid foods 6 hours before the procedure.
- › Stop drinking water and other clear liquids 3 hours before the procedure. You can take your medications with sips of water if you need to.
- › You must have a responsible adult to help you get home safely (outpatients only).

What to bring to the hospital


Be sure to bring your:

- › List of allergies
- › List of all your current medications (prescription, over-the-counter and herbal) and when you last took them
- › Photo ID
- › Medical insurance information and card
- › Medicare card (Medicare patients only)

Leave all valuables (jewelry, credit cards, money) at home. This includes body piercing jewelry and tongue studs. You may not wear any jewelry during surgery.

Arrival

Patients and visitors can park in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from Feinberg and Galter pavilions. For a discounted rate, bring your parking ticket with you. You can validate your ticket at the Customer Service Desks on the 1st and 2nd floor of Feinberg and Galter pavilions, and on the 1st floor of Prentice Women's Hospital.



Check in 1 hour before your procedure. Go to the 4th floor of Feinberg Pavilion at 251 East Huron Street. After you check in with the receptionist on the 4th floor, you and 1 member of your family will meet with staff. They will bring you to the prep and recovery area. They will review your health history, medications and allergies. The physician will do a short physical exam. After reviewing the procedure and answering any questions you may have, they will ask you to sign a written consent form.

You will change into a hospital gown. The care team will put an IV (into the vein) line in your arm or hand if you will be getting IV medication to relax you.

During the procedure

The nurse will help you lie on the exam table. They will connect you to heart and blood pressure monitors.


To reach the IVC, the physician will use either the vein in your neck (internal jugular) or the vein in your groin (femoral vein).

The care team will clean around the site with a special soap. It may feel cold. They will cover the site with sterile sheets. The physician will inject numbing medication into the area. You will feel some burning as the medication goes in. Using sound wave images (ultrasound), the physician will put a small needle into the vein. Then they will thread a small tube (catheter) into the needle and pass it to the IVC. You may feel pressure. You should not feel any pain.

Once the physician removes the filter, they will put hard pressure over the puncture site for about 5 to 10 minutes. Then they will put a small bandage or skin glue over the site. When your physician finishes the procedure, your care team will take you back to the prep and recovery area.

After the procedure

A nurse will check your heart rate, blood pressure and the puncture site. Let the nurse know if you have any pain or discomfort. After about 1 to 2 hours, you can go home or return to your hospital room if you are an inpatient.



Your nurse will review guidelines about your follow-up care. If you had medication to relax you and are going home, a responsible adult must be with you to help you get home safely.

At home

Diet

You may start your regular diet after discharge. You should drink at least 6 glasses of water (8 ounces each) over the next 24 hours. Water helps to clear the dye used during the procedure.

Activity

On the day you leave the hospital, limit your activities. Do not do physical exercise or heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds) for the next 3 days. Do not drive for 24 hours after the procedure. You may start all other daily activities 24 hours after the test.

Call the IR Department right away at **312.926.5200** (TTY: 711) if you notice:

- › Swelling or bleeding at the puncture site; if the site is bleeding, put pressure on the site for 5 to 10 minutes
- › A temperature more than 101 degrees F
- › Redness at the puncture site, or increasing tenderness or discharge at the puncture site


Follow-up care

After the procedure, you will follow up with your primary care physician. If you see a new physician, you should mention you have a history of blood clots and had an IVC filter in the past. This is important if you are:

- › Having surgery
- › Receiving treatment for a new condition
- › Taking new medications

If you are taking anticoagulant medications, such as warfarin (Coumadin®), enoxaparin sodium (Lovenox®) or dalteparin (Fragmin®), be sure to get the routine tests you need to check your blood's clotting time.

If you have signs of bleeding or bruising while taking these medications, contact your physician.



If you have signs or symptoms of blood clots, contact your physician right away or go to the nearest emergency department. Symptoms include:

- › Swelling, pain or warmth in one of your legs
- › Sudden shortness of breath, coughing or wheezing
- › Chest pain, palpitations (fast heart rate)

For more information about IVC filters and the IVC Filter Clinic, go to **ivcfilter.nm.org** or call 312.926.0600 (TTY: 711).

For more information about Northwestern Medicine, please visit our website at **nm.org**.