

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

## Understanding Your Subcutaneous Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator

The subcutaneous implantable cardioverter defibrillator (S-ICD) is a device that can protect you against dangerous abnormal heart rhythms. The S-ICD constantly monitors your heart rhythm. It 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 S-ICD treats these rhythms by delivering a shock to reset the heart back to a normal rhythm. Your physician will program your S-ICD to best fit your specific needs.

### Before the Procedure

You will receive a phone call with day of surgery instructions the business day before your procedure.

Your physician may order antibiotics for you to take before and after the procedure to lessen the risk of infection.

To prepare for the procedure:

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

### S-ICD placement procedure

The S-ICD placement is done in the Electrophysiology Lab. You will receive medication to make you comfortable during surgery.

The S-ICD is about the size of a deck of cards. It is implanted just under your skin with no wires touching your heart. The S-ICD is made up of a pulse generator (battery and electrical circuit) and a wire (electrode). The wire carries information about your heart rhythm back to the generator. It is used to transmit needed electrical impulses to your heart. Usually the S-ICD is implanted in the left side of your chest near your ribcage where the surgeon will make an incision. A pocket is formed under your skin where the generator will be inserted. Then, 2 smaller incisions just under your skin next to your breastbone will be made for the electrode. The electrode and the generator are connected after proper placement is confirmed. Your physician will program the S-ICD to best fit your specific needs.

You then will go to a cardiac monitoring unit to recover. Your S-ICD will be checked the next day to see that it is working properly. Most patients are then able to go home. Before you are discharged, a chest X-ray will be done.

Please call the Northwestern Memorial Hospital Device Clinic at 312.695.1965, 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.
- Steri-Strips™ (tape strips) can be removed 1 week after your wound check appointment.
- Protect your incisions from the sun to avoid sunburn and decrease scarring.

### ***Activity guidelines***

- Driving is not allowed for 1 week to 6 months after your S-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 S-ICD is able to treat the abnormal heart rhythm, not prevent it from happening.
- 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.
- Avoid exercise or activity that could result in blunt blows to the S-ICD site, such as contact sports.
- Do not go swimming or use whirlpools for 6 weeks until the incisions are completely healed to decrease the risk of infections.
- Avoid dental work for 3 months after the 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 S-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 312.695.1920, 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 S-ICD.

## **Follow-up care and appointments**

After your S-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 S-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 **every 3 months for the first year**. You will then return to the Device Clinic once a year for an exam if you choose not to do remote transmission.

### ***Remote monitoring***

Your physician may prescribe remote home monitoring between your clinic visits. This is an in-home monitoring system which gives your care team access to information about your S-ICD. This includes S-ICD battery, function and whether a shock was delivered to you at any time.

You will receive a communicator device for your home with instructions. This tabletop device will send information to a secure website for your care team to review. Please be sure to set up the device as soon as you receive it so that your care team can begin to monitor your S-ICD.

The blue “heart” button on the face of the communicator will flash when it is time to check your device. When you see the blue heart button flashing, simply press and release the button. Stay within arm’s reach of the communicator until the data has been collected.

## Living with your S-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 S-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 S-ICD. They can interfere with your S-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 S-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 S-ICD or specific tests you need, call the Device Clinic nurse at 312.695.1926, TTY 312.926.6363.