



Royal Papworth Hospital
NHS Foundation Trust

Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillators

Follow-up guide
for patients

Introduction

This leaflet has been written to provide information about the follow-up care arrangements for the Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) device that was implanted to help correct abnormal heart rhythms.

We hope it answers some of the questions or concerns you may have about your living with an ICD and follow-up care arrangements. It is not intended to replace talking with medical or nursing staff.

After the procedure

There are some things you may need to consider after your operation. Here are a few rules you should follow.

Do...

- Always carry your ICD ID card and the Trust's helpline numbers with you.
- Keep your mobile phone on the other side of your body at least six inches away from your ICD, and use the opposite ear to your ICD.
- Be careful with anti-theft devices in shops (often hidden near the entrance). Walk through them at a normal pace and don't stop in the middle or too close either side.
- Tell your cardiologist, cardiac physiologist or arrhythmia specialist nurse of any worries or anxieties you might have.
- Keep your appointments with your cardiologist and cardiac physiologists.
- Tell your doctor, dentist and other clinicians about your ICD as it may affect your treatment.
- Ask for help if things are difficult. Our contact details are in this leaflet. Please don't hesitate to get in touch.
- Enjoy life.

Don't...

- Don't get too close to a strong magnetic field, eg spot or arc welding.
- Don't touch the ICD site, particularly soon after the procedure. You will be advised about how to look after your wound.
- Don't put small magnets near your ICD (eg the magnets cats wear to activate cat flaps, magnets to hold scarves in place).
- Don't have an MRI scan unless you have been specifically advised it is safe to do so (CT scans are safe for your ICD).
- Don't change your heart medications (particularly beta blockers and antiarrhythmic drugs such as amiodarone) or stop your heart medication without checking with your cardiologist, cardiac physiologist or arrhythmia specialist nurse.
- Don't take part in any contact sports that could result in a blow to your ICD without discussion with your cardiologist, cardiac physiologist or arrhythmia specialist nurse.
- Don't be afraid to ask questions.

Back at home

Most people adapt fairly quickly to having an ICD implanted and are able to lead a relatively normal life after making a few adjustments. However, many people find they have some questions when they get home. Some common ones are listed here.

How can I care for my ICD wound?

The dressing over your wound is waterproof so you may shower as usual. You should remove the dressing yourself after four days and leave the wound uncovered. The stitches are under the skin and are dissolvable so there is no need to have them removed.

It is normal to have some bruising and this should resolve within two to three weeks. However, if you have any signs of infection such as increased pain, redness, swelling or discharge around the wound, or if the wound area feels hotter than the surrounding skin or you have a raised temperature, contact the arrhythmia specialist nurses for advice and support.

How much can I move my arm?

It is important to allow time for the device to settle in. We advise that you should not lift the arm nearest your ICD above your head or stretch behind your back for the first month. However, do keep your arm mobile to avoid shoulder stiffness by doing normal activities such as washing, dressing and eating.

Once the first month is over, gradually increase your activity and arm movements over the next few weeks.

Can I exercise?

Other medical conditions you have may limit your exercise but the ICD will not. It is important to build up your level of exercise over several weeks. Your cardiologist, cardiac physiologist or arrhythmia specialist nurse will be able to advise regarding safe exercise limits.

Activities involving repetitive arm exercise such as swimming, rowing and golf should be avoided for two to three months. It is advisable not to play contact sports as these may damage the ICD. Please

discuss specific sports or activities with the arrhythmia specialist nurse as sometimes special protection is possible.

How soon can I drive after implantation?

The regulations regarding driving are complex and subject to change. You will not be able to drive for a period of time after your ICD implantation. This could be either one month or six months depending on the reason the ICD was implanted. Your cardiologist or arrhythmia nurse will be able to advise you which ban applies to you.

You must contact the DVLA to notify them you have had an ICD implanted. When you notify the DVLA they will ask your cardiologist for medical details, which are given with your permission. Depending on these, the DVLA will contact you about resuming driving. You must inform your insurance company.

Special conditions apply for professional drivers; your cardiac physiologist will be able to advise you about the rules related to your situation.

If you find a seatbelt uncomfortable, we recommend placing extra padding over the ICD site. As a passenger, try sitting behind the driver, so the seatbelt crosses to the other shoulder.

Is it normal to feel anxious about life with an ICD?

Yes - you may experience a whole range of feelings. You may have experienced a stressful situation which is life-threatening and it is natural to feel anxious. Your condition may have changed your thoughts about your life.

Feelings of sadness, denial or anger are common. Some people feel vulnerable because of the device, while others feel positive because it treats their condition. The negative feelings usually disappear with time. If you would like to talk to someone, the arrhythmia specialist nurses are available to help.

Will having an ICD affect my physical contact with others?

Many people worry about receiving a shock from their ICD when in close physical contact with people or pets. There is no need for you or

other people to worry about this. If the ICD shocks you, the other person may be startled and feel a tingling sensation. This is completely harmless.

Can I go on holiday or travel abroad?

The ICD will not restrict you with any form of travel, although your cardiologist may advise against this if your general condition is likely to cause problems.

Take details of your device, and sufficient supplies of your medication. It is very important that your medication is carried in your hand luggage in case of delays or problems during your travel.

It is essential that your holiday insurance company is aware of your ICD.

Your clinic or ICD manufacturer will be able to give you a list of ICD clinics in any country you are visiting. Please contact the arrhythmia specialist nurses if you have any queries or concerns about spending time abroad.

If you are due a follow-up soon we would advise you

arrange to have this before you go away (please contact us if you need to change an appointment).

Can I go through security gates and metal detectors?

Anti-theft systems in shops and airports can interfere with ICDs, but they are safe provided that you go through at normal pace.

Sometimes these systems may set off the alarm; therefore, please advise airport security staff that you have an ICD before going through the archway detector. We recommend that you carry your ID card as you go through security to highlight the reason for the alarm.

Can I use a microwave oven, computer and other domestic electrical equipment?

Most household appliances are not a problem as long as they are well maintained and regularly serviced. Although it cannot be categorically ruled out, any CE marked domestic electrical appliances are unlikely to affect an ICD. Computers should not affect your ICD. As a rule, do not

place anything containing strong magnets over the ICD site.

Are there any restrictions regarding special environments?

Modern ICDs are rarely affected by common electrical environments. However if you work closely with high levels of electro-magnetic radiation it is important to discuss this with one of the cardiac physiologists.

Visiting hospital

If you are spending time in hospital, let hospital staff know that you have an ICD. Usually this will not affect your treatment, but in some instances we may need to adjust the settings of your ICD before or after your procedure.

You must not have an MRI scan (body imaging scan) unless you have an ICD especially designed to be compatible (please contact us if you are not sure about your device). This is because the MRI scanner uses strong magnets; other scans are safe.

ICDs may not be compatible with therapeutic radiation

dosing, TENS machines and lithotripsy. Please ask your cardiac physiologist for advice before having these treatments.

Will I know when my ICD is working?

Most ICDs do not affect the symptoms of a heart condition on a day to day basis, it is there purely to correct an abnormally fast heart rhythm if this occurs.

You may or may not be aware when your ICD detects and corrects your heart rhythm. This often depends on the type of therapy you are receiving and how you feel when you have a fast heart rhythm.

Some types of ICD are also designed to synchronise the pumping chambers of the heart in people suffering from heart failure; this is called Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy with Defibrillation (CRT-D).

The CRT-D device completely takes over the stimulation of the heart, so every impulse comes from the device rather than from your heart's natural pacemaker. If you have a

CTR-D device, although you may not be aware of the device pacing your heart, you may see a change in your heart failure symptoms. This action is in addition to the shock provided by the device if you have an abnormally fast heart rhythm.

What should I do if I receive a shock?

You may feel that you have been thumped hard in the chest. This can be momentarily painful and a bit frightening. Try to stay calm. The ICD has done its job and therefore you should not need to visit hospital as an emergency.

However, please telephone your ICD centre within 24 hours.

If you feel unwell after a shock you should phone 999 and ask to be taken to hospital to be assessed. It may not be your implant or ICD follow-up hospital, but they will be able to stabilise your condition and arrange your transfer if needed.

If you receive three or more shocks in a week or experience multiple shocks in a very short

space of time you should seek urgent advice from your cardiac physiologist or the arrhythmia specialist nurses as you may need your medication or ICD adjusting.

How can I avoid my ICD firing?

Often there is no obvious cause for your fast heart rhythm. Always take your prescribed medication. Some people feel that some kinds of physical or mental stress can set their heart beating erratically. If this is the case, try to avoid these situations.

How long will the battery in my ICD last?

This depends on use, but your battery is likely to last several years. Battery life is monitored at every ICD check. When the time comes that we need to consider changing the ICD, you will need to have another procedure to replace it.

What if I no longer want to be resuscitated?

There may come a point in your life when you would prefer not to have a shock to correct a life threatening heart rhythm. This may be if your heart condition has deteriorated or you have

another medical condition which cannot be cured.

The ICD can be deactivated so it will no longer deliver a shock. Turning off the ICD does not cause death nor will it cause any pain or deterioration in your condition.

Once it is deactivated, should you change your mind, it can be reactivated at any time. The choice to deactivate your ICD is entirely yours and there are people to advise and support you with your decision. If you would like to discuss this possibility, please talk to the arrhythmia specialist nurses.

What are my follow-up care arrangements?

It is important that you attend regular check-ups at an ICD clinic. These may be at three to twelve month intervals depending on the type and age of your ICD. Some devices can be monitored remotely. If this applies to your device, the procedure will be explained by a cardiac physiologist at the ICD clinic.

Routine follow-ups are specifically to check your ICD and do not replace your

normal medical management in any way.

What is the ICD registration card or form?

This is identification ID for your device: it has the make, model and serial number of your device as well as details of the original settings. This will be sent to you following your implantation; please carry it with you at all times and show it to any doctor or dentist who may treat you.

Always bring your ICD ID to your appointments.

How can I book and change my follow-up appointments?

It is important that you have an ICD check at least once a year. If you have not had an ICD follow-up within the past year, please contact us to book an appointment.

Please inform us if you are unable to attend your appointment so that your slot can be made available to another patient and your appointment can be rescheduled.

If you change your contact details please let us know so

that we can keep our records up to date.

Who do I contact if I have concerns about my care at Royal Papworth Hospital?

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is an independent office based at Royal Papworth Hospital who offer a confidential service to help you sort out any concerns you may have about the care Royal Papworth Hospital provides.

PALS

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Cambridge

CB2 0AY

Telephone: 01223 638896

Who can I contact for advice and support?

For advice and support

The Arrhythmia Specialist Nurses,

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust,

Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Cambridge, CB2 0AY

Telephone: 01223 638947

Email: phn-tr.arrhythmia-nurses@nhs.net

My ICD details:

For appointment bookings

Pacing and ICD Department Office, Royal Papworth Hospital

NHS Foundation Trust, Cambridge Biomedical Campus,

Cambridge, CB2 0AY

Telephone: 01223 639945

My appointment details:

Are there other organisations that offer advice about ICDs?

Arrhythmia Alliance - the heart rhythm charity

PO Box 3697
Stratford-Upon-Avon
Warwickshire
CV37 8YL

24hr helpline 01789 450787

Email: info@heartrhythmcharity.org.uk

Website: www.heartrhythmcharity.org.uk

British Heart Foundation

BHF
Greater London House
180 Hampstead Road
London NW1 7AW

Heart helpline 0300 330 3311

Email: supporterservices@bhf.org.uk

Website: www.bhf.org.uk

DVLA

Drivers Medical Group
DVLA
Swansea
SA99 1TU

Telephone: 0300 7906806

Email: eftd@dvla.gsi.gov.uk

Website: www.dft.gov.uk/dvla

Further information about health issues that affect driving

Website: www.direct.gov.uk/driverhealth

Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Papworth Road

Cambridge Biomedical Campus

Cambridge

CB2 0AY

Tel: 01223 638000

www.royalpapworth.nhs.uk

A member of Cambridge University Health Partners

Author ID: Arrhythmia Specialist Nurse
Department: Electrophysiology
Reprinted: July 2022
Review date: July 2024
Version: 3.2
Leaflet number: PI 51

© 2022 Royal Papworth Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Large print copies and
alternative language
versions of this leaflet
can be made available
on request.