



## Post-ICD (Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator) Placement Frequently Asked Questions

You had an ICD placed inside of you because it could reduce your risk of death.

### **What happens following the procedure?**

Following surgery, after a few hours of rest and observation, you will typically go home the very same day. You will see a bump under your skin where your device is located and the area may be tender. Do not raise your arm above the level of your shoulder on the side with the incision until after your 6 week assessment in the Cardiac Device Clinic. However, you must start to use your arm 1 - 2 days after your surgery otherwise you could end up with limited movement of your shoulder. You will gradually return to your everyday activities shortly after the procedure. As you do so, continue to follow the care instructions that were provided by your doctor or Cardiac Device Associated Professional and direct your questions to them.

### **What about follow-up after the procedure?**

After the implant, you will have regular follow-up visits with the Cardiac Device Clinic that is specifically dedicated to ICDs. Ask your doctor or Cardiac Device Associated Professional about your schedule for follow-up visits with each of your physicians. It is important to keep your appointments with each of your doctors and to follow the recommended daily care instructions to ensure the best possible results. Your device helps you only when it is functioning properly. It is important to receive regular follow-up care from both an electrophysiologist as well as from the doctor or nurse who is treating your heart failure.

### **What happens after a shock? Making a plan.**

If your ICD detects a problem with your heart rhythm, it may deliver a shock to your heart. People describe the shock as surprising and uncomfortable, and sometimes painful, but it passes quickly. It also means the ICD has done its job and that it may have saved your life. Your doctor or Cardiac Device Associated Professional will give you specific directions on what to do immediately after receiving a shock. Work with them to develop a plan that is right for you. Here are some things to do if you do receive a shock:

1. Follow the directions that were given to you by your doctor or Cardiac Device Associated Professional about what to do after receiving a shock.
2. Stay calm and find a quiet place to sit or lie down.
3. Take notice of how you feel and tell others.
4. Ask a family member or friend to stay with you until you feel better. Anyone touching you during a shock might feel the muscles in your chest and upper arms tighten but will not be harmed.
5. If you received ONE shock and feel well call the Cardiac Device Clinic for further discussion.
6. If you received two or more shocks and feel well, call the Cardiac Device clinic for further discussion. If it is after-hours or a weekend, go to the closest Emergency Department. Bring your ICD identification card and your medications with you.
7. If you received one or more shocks and feel UNWELL, call 911. Bring your ICD identification card and your medications with you.

Put this plan in a handy place and make sure to share it with your family and other caregivers so they can understand how to help you. It is helpful to understand that the shock you received was not caused by what you were doing at the time of the shock. Generally, you will still be able to do the activities you enjoy. Although getting a shock may reduce your confidence for a short time, it is important to return to your everyday activities and focus on enjoying life.



**Will I be able to drive?**

Most people with an ICD are able to resume personal driving after a waiting period. ICD recipients are not permitted to resume commercial driving. Please talk to your doctor about your specific case.

**Will I be able to travel?**

Most patients can travel without problems soon after their ICD implantation.

**Will I have a problem with airport security?**

Airport security systems may detect the metal of your ICD and you may be asked to undergo an additional search. Patients receiving ICDs are given a device identification card, which can be presented at airport security if needed. You can also request a hand search. You should request that any handheld screening devices be kept away from your ICD, since they have the potential to trigger defibrillation therapy.

**Can I walk through anti-theft systems?**

Yes. Sometimes, however, the systems located in stores, libraries, and other buildings may temporarily interfere with your ICD if you stop or linger near the equipment. Simply walk through the system at a normal pace.

**Are physical activities safe?**

Most physical activities are safe. An ICD can tell when your heart rate increases due to normal physical activities and when it increases because of a problem with your heart. Discuss your activity level with your doctor to determine what is best for you.

**What about intimacy?**

Most patients can resume intimate activity. People who have an ICD may wonder if the device could deliver a shock during sexual activities. This is rare, but possible. The shock will not hurt your partner. Your doctor or Cardiac Device Associated Professional can also provide helpful information on the subject of intimacy.

**How will I know if my ICD is working properly?****What happens if the battery runs out?**

The doctor who implanted your device or a Cardiac Device Associated Professional will schedule regular follow-up appointments to check your device. If your doctor finds the battery low, he or she will discuss a replacement procedure. Because the battery inside the device cannot be recharged, the entire device must be replaced, usually after 5 to 7 years.

**What will I do if I have concerns?**

Make a list of any worries you might have about your condition or the ICD. Discuss each concern with your doctor or Cardiac Device Associated Professional, your loved ones, or other appropriate sources of information that can help you to develop a plan about how to cope with your concerns.

**How do I adjust to having an ICD?**

Each person adjusts a little differently. Although many patients benefit from the use of these devices, individual results may vary. Your doctor will discuss the benefits and risks with you. The goal is for you to lead a more normal life as soon as possible. Build your confidence by making plans with friends and family. You may want to consider participating in a support group. If you have problems adjusting, there are many resources to help.

