

# You and your ICD

## (Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator)

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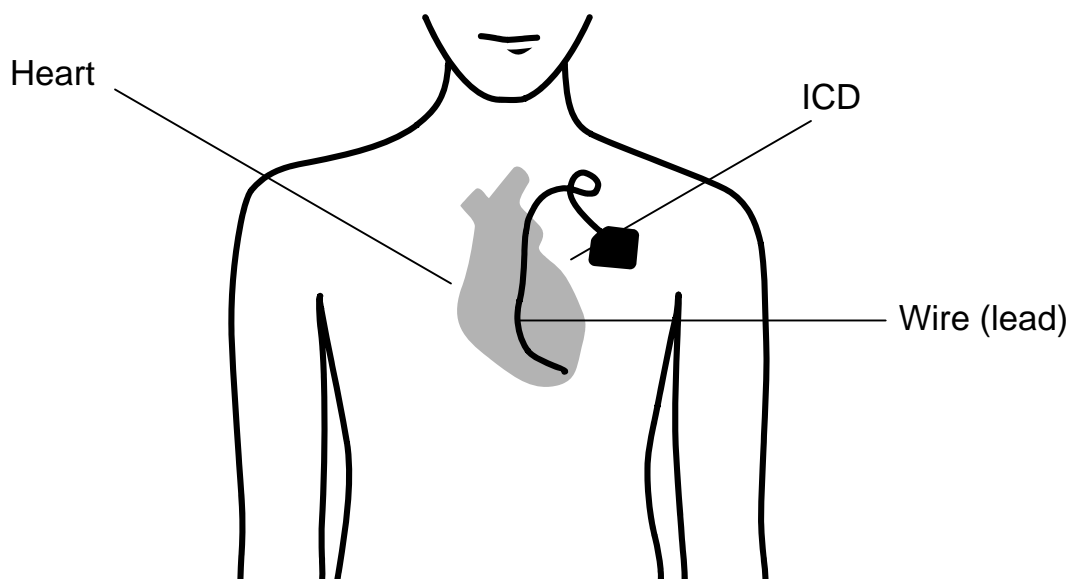
### Why do I need an ICD?

Your heart beats too fast. This is called Ventricular Tachycardia (VT) or Ventricular Fibrillation (VF). This type of irregular heartbeat can be life threatening.

An ICD will treat this life threatening heart rate if it happens.

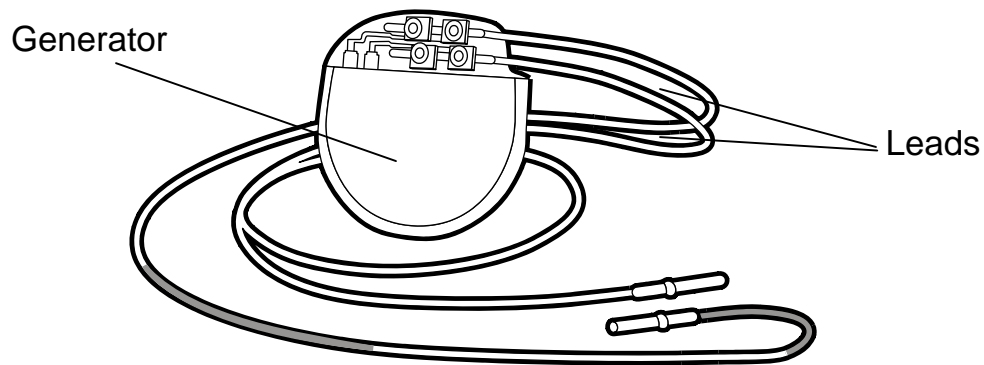
### What is an ICD?

An ICD is a device inserted into your upper chest just below the skin near your collarbone. It is connected to wires (leads) that are inserted into the heart. This will be done as a minor surgery.



An ICD is a 2-part system. Within the ICD is:

- A generator or battery that can deliver a shock to the heart to reset an extremely fast heart beat. This is called a defibrillator. It can also stimulate the heart to beat if it is too slow. This is called a pacemaker.
- The wires, called leads, lie in your heart and are attached to the generator of the ICD. There could be one, two, or three leads.



The ICD monitors your heartbeat and rhythm and sends electrical impulses to your heart when needed. This will prevent the heartbeat from beating too fast or from beating too slowly.

## **How long will I stay in hospital?**

Usually patients stay in hospital overnight and go home the next day.

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## **What do I need to know right after my surgery?**

Before you go home you will learn how to care for yourself at home. You will get an information booklet about your device. You will also be given an identification (ID) card about the type of ICD you have. This is a temporary ID card. You will get a permanent ID card in the mail about 8 weeks later. You must carry this ID card with you at all times.

**You will need to wear a Medic Alert™ bracelet that has “ICD” on it. Ask your pharmacist for information on how to order one.**

## **Medications**

Take your usual medications unless your doctor tells you something different. You will be given special instructions if you are taking blood thinners such as warfarin or Plavix®.

You will also get a prescription for any new medications that you may need.

## **Incision care**

Remove the bandage after 4 days.

There may be small white tapes called steri-strips over the incision. Leave them on until your 1 week follow-up visit.

Look at your incision daily until the skin edges are healed. Your incision is healed when it is closed with no gaps or drainage.

The stitches will dissolve and do not need to be taken out. You will not be able to see the stitches. Do not put any powder, lotion, rubbing alcohol or antiseptic solutions on the incision.

You may see bruising and swelling around the incision site. This is normal and will go away over the next few weeks.

If you have pain from your incision, take the pain medication that the doctor has prescribed for you.

Do not touch the incision site.

### **Call the ICD clinician or doctor if you have any of these signs of infection:**

- the skin around the incision is warm, red, or swollen
- the incision has drainage
- you have a fever, chills or flu-like symptoms

### **Taking a bath or shower**

You may bathe after your surgery but do not get the bandage wet. You may have a shower after the bandage is removed. Gently pat the incision dry. Do not rub over the incision or pull at any stitches.

### **Clothing, seat belts and driving**

Loose fitting clothing may feel better. Many people use a padded seat belt cover over the device for comfort when travelling in the car. You may also use a small towel between your incision and the seat belt.

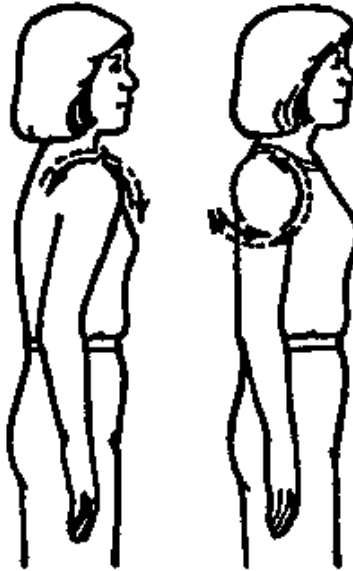
**It is recommended that you do not drive for 4 weeks after the implant unless your doctor gives you other instructions.**

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## What about other activities?

### For the next 4 to 6 weeks:

- Do not raise your hand on the side of your ICD any higher than the top of your head.
- Do shoulder rolls daily on the side of the ICD to prevent shoulder stiffness.



Picture used with permission from The Saunders Group Inc.

Stand or sit with good posture. Slowly rotate shoulders backward. Then rotate shoulders forward. Repeat 3 times.

- You may have sex when you feel comfortable.
- Do not do any heavy lifting. This means do not lift anything over 10 pounds or 4.5 kilograms such as a bag of groceries, small suitcase or small child.

## **When do I need to go to the ICD clinic?**

After your ICD has been inserted you will have regular check-ups at the ICD clinic.

You will be given your first appointment to come to the ICD clinic before you leave the hospital. This usually is within 2 weeks.

## **What should I expect at the ICD clinic?**

At your first follow-up visit, you will be at the clinic for about 30 minutes to 1 hour. Other follow-up visits will take less time. You will see the ICD clinician for your visits.

- At your first visit your incision will be checked.
- For **every** visit, bring an up to date list of your medications. Ask your pharmacist to print you a copy when you fill your prescription.
- Your ICD will be checked at each visit. Adjustments will be made if needed during your visit. You will be given follow-up appointment at each visit.
- At your visits you can talk about all of your questions and concerns.

After your first visit you will have another visit in 3 months, and then every 6 months. If you cannot keep an appointment you must reschedule your visit with the Outpatient Clinic.

Outpatient Clinic – 905-527-4322, ext. 46266

You will need to mention that you have an ICD when you book your appointments.

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## What do I do if I feel a shock from my ICD?

1. **Remain calm.** A shock from the ICD will happen if the device senses the extremely fast heart rate referred to as Ventricular Tachycardia (VT) or Ventricular Fibrillation (VF). The ICD delivers this shock to reset the heartbeat and slow it down.
2. **Call the ICD Clinician** if you have one shock and you feel no other symptoms.

905-527-4322, ext. 46687 – Joan Dean, RN

905-527-4322, ext. 44887 – Laurene Long, RN

3. Be prepared to leave a message and we will return your call on the next business day. You will be scheduled for the next clinic day to check your device.

### **Call 911 or your local emergency number right away if you:**

- have more than one shock,
- have a shock and feel dizzy, lightheaded, or nauseous, or
- pass out

## What safety measures do I need to take with an ICD?

You will receive a booklet after your procedure that will answer many of your questions.

**Tell all health care professionals that you have an ICD before you have any treatments.**

## **Where is the ICD clinic?**

We are located at:

Outpatient Clinic  
Hamilton General Hospital, Main Level  
237 Barton Street East  
Hamilton, ON

Clinic days are on Wednesdays and Fridays.

Call the ICD Clinician if you have any non-urgent questions,  
leave a message and the clinician will call you back.

905-527-4322, ext. 44887