Your Subcutaneous Implantable Cardiac Defibrillator (ICD)

What you need to know

This document explains how to care for your subcutaneous ICD and keep your incision clean and safe while you heal. It also explains when to call for help and how to stay safe around devices such as metal detectors.

Who to Call

- For questions about your appointments, procedure, or care after your procedure, call the Cardiology Clinic weekdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.:
  - **UWMC - Montlake patients:** 206.598.4300
  - **UWMC - Northwest patients:** 206.363.1004
  - **HMC - Harborview patients:** 206.744.3475
- **Weekends, holidays, or after hours:** Call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the EP Fellow on call. This is a doctor who works with your primary electrophysiologist. They specialize in caring for patients with ICDs.
- **For all urgent concerns, call 911.**

If You Go Home the Same Day

Before you are discharged, a doctor or nurse practitioner will talk with you about the results of your procedure and check your insertion site. Please ask questions if you do not understand something your doctor or nurse tells you.



A responsible adult must take you home after your procedure.

For Your Safety

You had anesthesia or sedation for this procedure. These medicines make you sleepy and make it hard for you to think clearly. Because of this:

- **A responsible adult must take you home.** You may not take a bus, shuttle, taxi, or other transportation by yourself.
- For the next **24 hours:**
  - Do **NOT** drive. Make sure you have a responsible adult who can help you during this time.
  - Do **NOT** be responsible for children, pets, or an adult who needs care.
  - Do **NOT** drink alcohol or take drugs other than the ones your doctors prescribed or suggested.
  - Do **NOT** make important decisions or sign legal papers.

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Wound Care

- Call one of the numbers listed under "Who to Call" on page 1 **right away** if you have:
  - Redness, swelling, or drainage at your puncture site
  - Fever higher than 100.4°F (38°C)
  - Chills
  - Any concerns or questions about your wound
- Remove your ***dressing*** (bandage) **72 hours** (3 days) after your surgery.
- Your wound was closed with skin glue or steri-strips. This will peel away in 7-14 days. **Do not pull these off.** Let them fall off on their own.
- You may shower **72 hours** after your surgery. Do **NOT** submerge your incision until it is **completely healed**. This usually takes 3 to 4 weeks.
- When you shower:
  - Gently clean the site with mild soap and water. Do not scrub or rub area.
  - Gently pat dry with a clean towel.
- Do **not** put creams, lotion, ointment, or powder on your incision until it is **fully** healed.
- Avoid touching the area over or around your ICD. Do **not** poke or twist your ICD.
- In the car, add some padding to your seat belt strap if it crosses over your ICD implant site. Keep this padding in place until your wound is fully healed.
- **Do not let anyone poke or probe your incision** with fingers or instruments before checking with us first. If a healthcare provider feels this needs to be done to provide your care, have them **call the EP doctor *before*** doing this type of exam or procedure.
- We will check your wound 7 to 14 days after your surgery. It is **very** important that you go to this appointment and all your follow-up visits.

See the appointment page your nurse gave you for dates and times of your follow-up visits.

Activity Restrictions

- **No** vigorous or difficult activity for 7 days (1 week)
- **No** shoveling for 7 days (1 week)
- **No** swimming until the incision sites are **completely healed**
- We do encourage you to use your arm for normal and routine daily tasks.

Special Long-Term Precautions

Travel

- **Always** carry your ICD identification (ID) card.
- If you must go through a metal detector, hand your ID card to security staff. Tell them that you might set off the alarm.

- You may also want to carry a card with this information in the language(s) of the country (or countries) you will visit or travel through.
- Although some studies show there are no risks to ICDs from metal detectors, most makers still suggest being careful:
  - You may walk through the metal-detection arch, but do **not** stay inside the arch or lean on the sides of the structure.
  - If security staff use a metal-detection hand wand, ask them to avoid waving or holding it over your ICD.
  - If you feel dizzy or have fast heartbeats (*palpitations*) when you are near a metal detector, move farther away. Your ICD should begin to work properly right away.
  - Body scanners that are used in some airports and other places will not affect your ICD.
- Always carry a full list of your current medicines. Include their doses, how often you take them each day, and why you are taking them.
- Always carry your medicines with you in your carry-on bags. Do **not** pack them in your checked luggage.
- Carry phone numbers for your healthcare providers in case of emergency.

Magnetic Fields

Magnets or magnetic fields are found in or are created by many items we are around every day. Some of these are:

- Small appliances with motors
- Stereo speakers
- Gas engines
- Cell phones
- Desktop and laptop computers
- Welding machines
- CB radios
- Anti-theft devices in stores
- Metal detectors

It is safe to be near microwaves, blenders, and most other items on the list. But some create strong magnetic fields that interfere with your ICD.

Basic advice and precautions for sources of magnetic fields are on the next 2 pages. **For more details, contact the maker of your ICD.**

NOTE: These suggestions assume that the equipment is properly grounded, in working order, and used for its intended purpose.

Cell Phones

Most cell phones are safe if you:

- Carry it **at least** 6 inches (15 centimeters) away from your implant site. Most cell phones keep sending a signal even when not in use.
- Hold it to your ear on the **opposite side** of your ICD.

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Radio Transmitters

Radio transmitters such as CB radios, walkie-talkies, and remote-controlled toys may interfere with your ICD. Based on how many watts a device generates, here are guidelines for how far to keep away from it.

Watts Generated*	How Far to Stay Away from It
3 watts	12 inches (30 centimeters)
25 to 199 watts	3 feet (1 meter)
200 watts or more	10 feet (3 meters)

If you do not know the power output of your device, call the maker of the device.

Car Engines and Small Motors

- Most small appliances or hand tools with motors are safe to use when the item is grounded, in good condition, and is held the right distance from your body for safe and proper operation.
- Use caution when working on car engines. Keep your upper body at least 24 inches (60 centimeters) away from a running car engine.

Electric Toothbrushes

- Keep the toothbrush handle **at least** 1 inch (2.5 centimeters) away from your ICD.
- Keep **at least** 6 inches (15 centimeters) between the charger and your ICD.

Medical Procedures or Equipment

Always tell your providers and healthcare personnel that you have an ICD. Never assume everyone involved in your healthcare knows this.

These procedures or devices may interfere with your ICD:

- *Electrocautery* (a surgical procedure that uses an electric current to remove unwanted tissue, seal off blood vessels, or create an incision)
- Placement of a *central venous catheter* (a catheter that is placed in a large vein to deliver medicine)
- *Lithotripsy* (a procedure that uses shock waves to break up stones in the kidney, bladder, or ureter)
- *Ultrasound* (an imaging technique that uses sound waves)
- *Electrolysis* (hair removal)
- External *cardioversion* or *defibrillation* (a procedure to bring an abnormal heart rhythm back to normal)
- Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) machines
  - **Note:** You **must** contact your EP team before MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) exams. Let the MRI team know you have an ICD (Implantable Cardiac Defibrillator).
- Hearing aid with a coil around the neck that detects sounds and sends digital signals to the amplifier
  - **Note:** Before using this type of hearing aid, call your ICD maker.
- Radiation therapy (usually used in cancer treatment)
- TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) for pain control
- Scales that measure body fat

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Other Precautions

Many makers of ICDs advise that you also **avoid being around or using these items:**

- Arc welders
- Jackhammers
- Stun guns
- Gas-powered chainsaws
- Electric steel furnaces
- Induction furnaces such as kilns
- Magnetic (therapy) mattress pads or pillows
- Dielectric heaters (heaters that use radio waves or microwaves)
- Electrical transmissions towers (if you are inside a restricted area)

Dental Work

- Tell your dentist that you have an ICD. Most times, you do not need to be concerned that any of the devices the dentist uses will interfere with your ICD.
- If you did not need antibiotics for dental procedures before your surgery, you will not need antibiotics now that you have an ICD. If you have questions, please ask your doctor.

When to Call for Help

- Call 911 right away if you have:
  - A shock from your device **AND** you do not feel well — for example, you feel dizzy, are short of breath, have chest pain, or you passed out.
  - More than 1 shock in a row from your device.
- **If you receive a shock from your device AND you are feeling fine**, call an EP nurse or your Cardiology Clinic weekdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. (see phone numbers on page 1).
- If you need to speak to someone after hours or on a weekend or holiday, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Cardiology EP Fellow on call.
- Keep a log of the shocks you receive. It is helpful for us to know:
  - The **number of shocks** you have had
  - **How you felt** before and after each shock
  - The **time of day** you received each shock
  - **What you were doing** when each shock occurred

Your ICD

This handout covers **only** basic precautions you may need to take with your ICD. Each device may have other special precautions to follow.

If you have any questions about what might cause problems for your new ICD, contact the maker for more specific information. Here is contact information for 4 companies that make ICDs:

- **Abbott**
  www.sjm.com
  818.362.6822 or 800.681.9293
- **Biotronik**
  www.biotronikusa.com
  800.547.0394
- **Guidant/Boston Scientific**
  www.guidant.com
  866.GUIDANT (866.484.3268)
  www.bostonscientific.com
  888.272.1001
- **Medtronic**
  www.medtronic.com
  800.551.5544 or 800.328.2518

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