

PATIENT INFORMATION LEAFLET

**Discharge Advice Following Insertion of an  
Internal Cardiac Defibrillator (ICD)**

These guidelines are for general information only. Your specific instructions may vary.

Please note that there are different types of ICD.

- A traditional ICD is inserted just below your collar bone with the leads threaded through a large vein into the heart.
- A subcutaneous (under the skin) ICD is inserted in the left side of the chest with leads running along your ribs and breastbone but not directly into the heart.

**Following the procedure**

An overnight hospital stay and bed rest is recommended until the following morning. A sling is often used to prevent excessive arm movements which may dislodge the leads. A chest X-ray will be performed to check the position of the ICD and ensure that your lungs are functioning properly. An ICD check is performed before discharge. If the results are satisfactory, one of the doctors from the Mater Private Team will review and discharge you home.

After the procedure, it is typical to feel tired for a few days, but most people find that they can immediately return to their regular lifestyle considering a few restrictions.

**Pain control**

It is common to experience a mild or dull ache at the ICD site for one to two weeks after implantation. Regular painkillers such as Paracetamol or Paracetamol and Codeine combinations are advised for the first few days. If you experience severe pain, it is important to contact us.

**Wound Care**

Keep the wound dressing clean and dry for one week. Avoid using any soap, shampoo, or any cosmetic products on or near the wound. If there are steristrips, they should be left in place -they will come off on their own within a week. If the wound has been glued, do not peel the glue off – it will gradually come off over time. It is safe to get the glue wet, but it should not be washed or scrubbed. We recommend sponge washing during this time as opposed to showers or baths which may cause the wound to become infected.

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After one week, remove any dressings and shower as normal. Pat the wound dry and leave it uncovered. Only re-dress if oozing is noted. Sutures are all dissolvable and will not need to be removed.

If you experience worsening pain/ swelling/ redness/ discharge from the site or fevers, it is important to call us straight away.

### **Bleeding**

It is rare to have severe bleeding from the ICD site once you are at home. If bleeding occurs or if the wound becomes more swollen, it is important to call us.

### **Medications**

A course of antibiotics is generally prescribed for 2-3 days after discharge (this may vary on your Consultant Cardiologist). Anticoagulants (except Warfarin) are often held for another 2-3 days after discharge (this may vary depending on your Consultant Cardiologist and your situation).

Your \_\_\_\_\_, which is a blood thinner, should be resumed on \_\_\_\_\_.

### **Movement / Activity**

You can move your arm gently the day after the procedure. Be careful not to lift your arm too high or put too much pressure on it. Please avoid any heavy lifting or strenuous over arm movement for four weeks. Full immersive swimming and playing golf should be avoided until the six-week device check and wound review. This gives time for the wound to heal and the leads to “bed in” or settle into place.

Even though most electromagnetic fields in the home environment will rarely affect the function of an implantable defibrillator, it is recommended you keep any item creating a magnetic field (including mobile phones, wired headphones, and earbuds) at least 6 inches/ 15 centimetres away from your ICD. Keep them in a pocket away from your ICD. **Do not** put them in a breast pocket or let them drape around your neck.

Most household items including microwaves, kitchen appliances, cordless phones, radios, televisions, video games, CD players, hair dryers, electric shavers, electric toothbrushes, leaf blowers, lawn mowers, garage door openers, computers, and small DIY power tools

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should not affect your ICD if they are used as intended and maintained to normal safety standards.

If you are cooking with an induction hob, keep a distance of at least 2 feet from your device as this type of hob generates an electromagnetic field that may interfere with your device settings.

### Sports

Walking and other exercises are good for you, but what is considered a safe level of physical activity with an ICD vary from person to person.

- Generally, avoid contact sports and activities that could damage your ICD or pose a risk if the ICD delivers a shock.
- Never go swimming alone.

### Sex and intimacy

It is safe to have sex when your wound has healed and when you feel ready to. The normal increase in heart rate during sex should not cause your ICD to shock you. If your ICD does deliver a shock during sex, it won't hurt the person you are with. Choose a position that avoids pressing on your ICD and make sure your partner knows a shock won't hurt them.

### Returning to work

Most people can return to work 3 to 10 days after the procedure, depending on their occupation. If you require a medical certificate for your employer, please ask the medical team to arrange this before you are discharged from the hospital.

As a general rule, although not strictly prohibited, it is our policy to avoid power tools or welding wherever possible, because of the possibility of interference with your defibrillator.

If it is required, please refer to the following safety precautions below.

**Welding safety precautions** may include but not limited to:

- Strictly following the safety precautions mentioned in the welder manual.
- Working in a dry area. Wearing dry, electrically insulated gloves and dry shoes.
- Maintaining a safe distance of 2 feet (24 inches) between the ICD and the arc welding equipment (i.e., the power supply, cabling, and the arc.).

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- Keeping all cables straight, close together, and extending away from the body. Do not coil cables.
- Connecting the ground clamp to the metal as close to the point of welding as possible. Arrange the work so the handle and rod will not contact the metal being welded if they are accidentally dropped.
- Using short, intermittent, and irregular bursts at the lowest feasible energy levels; wait several seconds between welds. Do not weld rapidly repeating short bursts, as they are more likely to be interpreted as electrical activity of the heart.
- Limiting welding currents to less than 160 amps.
- Working with an informed person who understands these suggestions and could call emergency services if needed.
- If symptoms of dizziness, faintness, nausea, shocks, etc. are felt, stopping immediately and stepping away from the work area or turn off the equipment.

#### **Chainsaw Safety Precautions** may include but not limited to:

- Maintaining a 6-inch distance between the motor of an electric chainsaw and your ICD.
- Ensuring that the equipment is properly grounded.
- Maintaining 1 foot distance between the components of the ignition system of a gas-powered chainsaw and your ICD. It is more advisable to use one that is built with the spark plug located away from the hand grips.
- Immediately stop cutting and turn off your chainsaw if you start feeling lightheaded, dizzy, or you believe your implantable defibrillator has delivered a shock.
- Do not work on the engine while it is running.
- Do not touch the coil, distributor, or spark plug cables of a running engine.
- Working with an informed person who understands these suggestions and could call emergency services if needed.

#### **Driving**

If you have a Group 1 driving license (for cars, motorbikes, and tractors), do not drive for at least four weeks after your ICD implant. If you have a recent blackout / rhythm abnormality, cardiac arrest or a shock from your device, you may be asked not to drive for a longer period. Your cardiologist will advise you when you can legally drive again.

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If you have a Group 2 Entitlement driving license (HGV and PCV), you ARE NOT permitted to drive. You must notify the NDLS (National Driver License Service) and your insurance company that you now have an ICD.

Additionally, **further driving restrictions may apply** depending on the nature of the procedure you have had done, your occupation, and the presence of co-existing disqualifying health issues.

### Hearing an ICD alarm

The ICD has a built-in alarm. It performs regular self-checks and will beep if there is a problem. The most common causes for the alarm are:

- Low battery
- Longer-than-recommended gap in communication between the ICD and home monitor.

Other causes for these alarms might be due to lead faults or being too close to a strong electromagnetic field. In this case, the alarm should cease once you move away from the magnet.

If you hear a beeping tone, please contact us so we can check your device for the cause of this alarm. If you are travelling, any hospital with cardiology service can examine your ICD.

### Adjusting to ICD treatment

- You might feel an abnormal heart rhythm before the ICD treats it.
- A painless fluttering sensation may be felt when the ICD is treating a rapid rhythm. If this treatment is unsuccessful, the ICD will deliver an electric shock.
- An electric shock from an ICD can be very unpleasant and typically feels like a hard thud to the chest. You may feel dizzy or faint shortly before the shock is delivered.
- Some people might have many shocks in a year while others may never have one.
- If you suspect that your ICD might administer a shock, sit or lie down. Tell the person you are with how you are feeling.

### What to do if you get an ICD shock?

Remain calm. Call our **24-hour Urgent Cardiac Care Department on 1800 247 999**, and we will arrange for the ICD transmission through your home monitor. This interrogation will tell us if the shock was delivered for an appropriate reason or not.

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If you do receive a shock and feel very unwell, go to your nearest emergency department.

### Internal Cardiac Defibrillator (ICD) Card

An internal cardiac defibrillator (ICD) card will be given to you before discharge from the hospital. This card has important details which identify your device type and the settings to which it has been programmed. It is important that you carry this ICD card with you at all times.

### Medical tests

If you are having any medical or dental treatment, tell the medical staff that you have an ICD in advance.

If you need to have a test such as an X-ray or magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan, tell the technician about your ICD ahead of time. Give as much notice as possible so the centre can find out if an MRI is safe for your particular ICD. The test centre will also arrange for a cardiac physiologist to switch off your ICD right before the scan and switch it back on afterwards.

### Travel

Although it may be tempting to travel during your recovery period, we recommend that you do not fly for two weeks after your procedure. This may vary depending on your recovery progress and if you received a recent shock or experienced a cardiac arrest. Always consult with your cardiologist in these instances.

If you are travelling abroad, we advise that you do not go through security scanner and that the handheld wand is not passed directly over to your ICD during security checks. This is because it interrupts the settings of the device. **Always carry your ICD identity card with you.**

Write down the contact details of the nearest hospital with cardiology department to your holiday destination in case your ICD needs to be checked and reprogrammed while you are away. It is advisable to pack enough medicines for your holiday in your hand luggage.

### Follow up post ICD implantation

Before leaving the hospital, please ensure you have been issued information about your ICD and that you have a follow-up appointment for approximately 6 weeks.

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### These should happen during you ICD Check in Day 1:

- Device and lead parameters are measured
- Device ID is provided
- Six weeks follow-up appointment is given
- You will be set up a home monitor. The home monitor is either a phone app or a box that sits beside your bed. The home monitor links with the device each night and transmits to the cardiac pacing department if any alerts or arrhythmias have been identified.

#### *Please note:*

- *There is a scheduled transmission sent directly to the pacing department every 3 months which informs us if there are any alerts or not.*
- *This is not an emergency service; the transmissions are viewed on Monday-Friday 8am – 4pm.*
- *You may receive a phone call from the Cardiac Device Nurse Specialist or your Consultant to follow up regarding the transmitted alerts.*

#### **Tips to remember**

- Your ICD is implanted to protect you in the event of developing a dangerous heart rhythm. Many people go on to live full and active lives with an ICD in place.
- Let your family and friends know about your ICD. Instruct them what to do if you get a shock.
- Always carry your ICD card with you.
- Attend your regular ICD check-ups.
- Support groups and services are in place to help people cope with ICD and other heart conditions, so ask for help if you need it. One example is the Heart Support Network on Facebook. Please refer to QR code below.

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**How to contact us:**

- Cardiac Device Nurse - +353 87 000 9630 (Tues-Friday office hours)
- Urgent Cardiac Care – 1800 247 999
- Mater Private Network Dublin Reception – +353 1 885 8888



Click the QR code to search for your Mater Private Cardiologist's contact details



Click the QR code to access the RSA Guidelines for Medical Fitness to Drive



Click to join the Irish Heart Foundation Heart Support Network Facebook Group for advice, information, and support