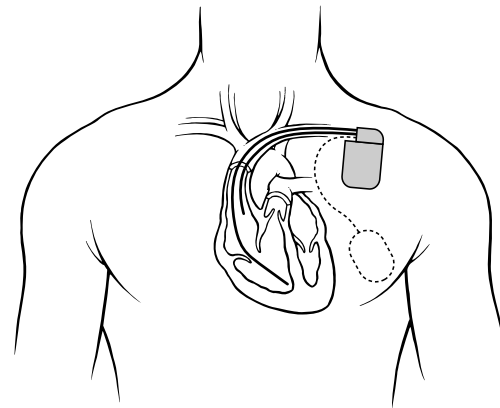




What Is an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD)?

An ICD is a device about the size of a pager that monitors your heart rate. It uses batteries to send electric signals to a heart that's beating too slow, same as a pacemaker. It can also deliver an electric shock to help restore a normal heartbeat to a heart that's beating chaotically and much too fast. Cardiac defibrillation is a way to return an abnormally fast or disorganized heartbeat to normal with an electric shock.



An implantable cardiac defibrillator is a lifesaving device that's put inside your body.

How does it work?

- For people with very bad heart rhythm problems, a defibrillator is implanted under the skin of your chest, near the collarbone, and wires are run to your heart.
- It knows when the heartbeat is not normal.
- It tries to return the heartbeat to normal.
- When your heartbeat is too slow, it works as a pacemaker and sends tiny electric signals to your heart.
- When your heartbeat is too fast or chaotic, it gives defibrillation shocks to stop the abnormal rhythm.
- It works 24 hours a day.

How do I live with it?

- Visit your doctor regularly.
- Talk to your doctor about your activities.
- Stay away from magnets and strong electrical fields.
- At the airport, tell the guards not to use hand-held metal detectors on you.
- Tell your other doctors and your dentist that you have an implanted defibrillator.
- If you go to a hospital, tell the doctors and nurses that you have one.
- Carry an ID card so others know that you have a defibrillator.

Doctor's Orders

- Ask your doctor to list what types of machines or equipment you should avoid and what you can and cannot do when you have an implanted defibrillator. Example: Don't risk going up on a ladder to clean gutters.

Can I use a cell phone or microwave oven if I have an ICD?

Microwave ovens, electric blankets, remote controls for TV and other common household appliances won't affect your ICD. You can use a cell phone, too, if you take these steps:

- Hold the phone to the ear on the side of your body opposite from your ICD.

- When your phone is on, try to keep it at least six inches away from your ICD. For example, don't carry your phone in your breast pocket over your ICD.

How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease.

3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit StrokeAssociation.org.

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

What are the warning signs of heart attack and stroke?

Warning Signs of Heart Attack

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- **Chest discomfort**
- **Discomfort in other areas of the upper body**
- **Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort**
- **Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness**

Warning Signs of Stroke

- **Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body**
- **Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding**
- **Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes**
- **Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination**
- **Sudden, severe headache with no known cause**

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1 ... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

Does the shock hurt?

Can I swim?

