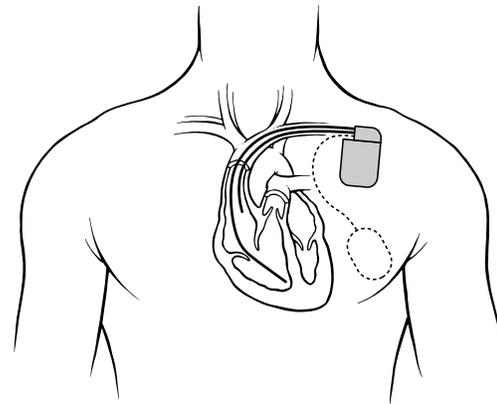




# What Is an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD)?

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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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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](http://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](http://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?

