

## CAN I STOP TAKING MY PILLS NOW I HAVE AN ICD IMPLANTED?

This depends on your underlying condition.

The ICD does not stop you getting heart rhythm disturbances. It only stops them when they occur.

Some of the pills you are on may reduce the frequency of getting rhythm disturbances (arrhythmias) and you may therefore need to keep taking them as the ICD is there as a back-up in case the pills don't work.

You may also be taking pills for other reasons such as helping the heart muscle pump efficiently or reducing the fluid levels and helping your kidneys excrete water more efficiently. **You will not be able to stop these.**

**Do not stop taking any prescribed medicines without speaking to your GP or Cardiologist.**

Royal Surrey County Hospital  
NHS Foundation Trust

Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals  
NHS Trust

Epsom and St. Helier  
University Hospitals  
NHS Trust

Frimley Park Hospital  
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Surrey and Sussex  
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## Living with an ICD?

### *Questions you may ask*



Patient Information Leaflet  
for People Living with an  
Internal Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD)

*If you would like to meet other  
people living with an ICD, then why  
not come along to the ICD Club.*

*It is based in West Surrey but is  
open to anyone living in Surrey*

Contact Ian Clement on  
01932 722530 or email  
[ian.clement@asph.nhs.uk](mailto:ian.clement@asph.nhs.uk)

## QUESTIONS PATIENTS ASK

When you have an ICD implanted there are always questions that arise that you think about when you get home and wish you had asked.

We try and cover all eventualities when we discuss the implications of having an ICD before and after the implant but inevitably issues arise after the implant that raise questions.

## WHEN CAN I RETURN TO WORK?

Usually we recommend that everybody who has just had an ICD implanted takes a month off work to allow the ICD and newly implanted leads to settle down. It is advisable to limit your exercise level for this period and to avoid all strenuous exercise.

The reason for this is to allow the leads to settle into place and to avoid any stress on the system. There is a small but real risk of the leads moving until they have had a chance to form tissue growth around them. Don't restrict all movement but try and avoid any sudden or jerky movements that could cause problems. It is very important to keep some mobility so gentle arm exercises are important to prevent your shoulder becoming stiff or frozen.

For those patients who are still working there is no reason for not returning to work after the first month's check on your ICD provided that it has all healed up well and that you are feeling OK. This will depend on your underlying condition and your Cardiologist may recommend a further period of recovery.

Your employer may want details about your ICD and if necessary we will provide any information that will help you return to work with as little fuss as possible.

In some cases people get back to work earlier but this depends on how well they are and how well the implant site has healed.

## WHEN CAN I GET BACK TO NORMAL?

If your ICD clinic and Cardiologist have cleared you for returning to normal then there is no reason why you should not get on with life as you did before your implant.

In our experience many patients are naturally worried about how far can they lead a normal life and if exercise like walking the dog or the gym are bothering you we will make sure that you have some form of rehabilitation or exercise test to reassure you that you will not cause your ICD to trigger whilst doing normal life style activities.

Many of our patients do regular exercise and have no problems with this. There are plenty of people with ICDs who play competitive sports. If your underlying cardiac condition restricts your exercise level anyway then your ICD implant will make no difference to this. Check it out with your follow-up centre.

## CAN I RESUME A NORMAL SEX LIFE?

Yes! If it was OK before it will be OK after. Again, we recommend that you do nothing too vigorous for the first month but after that – no limits!

## WHAT HAPPENS IF ANYONE IS TOUCHING ME WHEN I GET A SHOCK FROM MY ICD?

This is not a problem. The worst that anyone touching a patient who has a shock can feel is a slight tingle or a physical "jump". No harm can come to anyone touching a patient with an ICD. Many patients who have small children or grand-children worry about this. There is no need to worry - it will not harm anyone.

## HOW QUICKLY WILL MY WOUND HEAL?

Most people find that their wound incision heals in about 1-2 weeks. You will be given antibiotics when your ICD is implanted to prevent infection.

However, you should keep an eye out for any signs of redness or swelling over the ICD. This could mean you have an infection and if this happens contact your ICD clinic immediately.

## WILL I BE ABLE TO TRAVEL?

If you feel fit and well and there is no medical reason why you should not travel then your ICD is no bar to going wherever you want. Just check out our travel information leaflet for any pointers about any precautions you should take.

## WILL I ALWAYS BE AWARE OF THE ICD?

No. Because a "foreign body" has been implanted it is quite usual to be very aware of its presence in your body for a while after implant. Some people may have trouble sleeping in a certain position for a while and will need to find an alternative until it becomes more comfortable.

Most people find that once they have started getting back to normal and the incision has healed up that they become less and less aware of it as time goes on. This is usually by 6-8 weeks after implant when everything has settled down.

If it continues to be a problem then you should let your ICD clinic or implanting doctor know.

## WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I FEEL UNWELL?

This depends on how unwell you feel. If you feel generally unwell but have had no palpitations or shock from the ICD then you should contact your GP. He should be able to assess your general health with reference to your condition and decide whether you should seek additional help.

If you feel that your problem could be related to your cardiac condition then contact the ICD clinic. They will talk through your problem with you and decide on the best course of action to take.

If you need to call an ambulance i.e. it is a genuine emergency, make sure that you inform them that you have an ICD and show them any emergency instructions that you have been given.

(See our leaflet on EMERGENCIES)