

Living with an ICD

An ICD is a computerized device, placed under the skin with wires connected to the heart. The two key functions include:

- Pacing the heart if your heart rate is too slow.
- Delivering a shock if the heart goes into a dangerous rhythm to help reset it.

The ICD does not shock under normal conditions. It monitors your heart rhythm 24/7 and acts only when needed. The doctor or nurse will tell you how the ICD is programmed.

Shock Plan

If the ICD gives a shock, follow one of the plans below based on symptoms.

- **Child is feeling fine:** Call the clinic and then send in a remote transmission.
- **Child is feeling sick and/or ICD gives multiple shocks: 911Call.**

Activity Restrictions

You can return to school/daycare/work in about 2 days with these restrictions:

- **No** lifting over 10 lbs
- **Do not** raise implant arm above shoulder
- **Avoid** repetitive arm movements (swimming, bowling, golf)
- Wear a sling for 2–3 days
- Start gentle shoulder circles 2–4 times daily (don't lift too high)
- **Avoid** for 4 weeks:
 - Direct impact to your pacemaker
 - Dental work
 - Swimming
 - Tattoos/piercings
 - Chiropractic care

Wound Care

- Remove the bandage after 72 hours
- Leave incision open to air
- Keep the area clean and dry
- Let Steri-Strips® fall off on their own, if present
- Absorbable stitches, if present, may be visible and will fall off in 2–3 weeks
- **No** swimming or soaking for 4 weeks (showers are OK)
- **Avoid** sunlight/tanning beds on the incision for 4 weeks
- Expect a slight bulge over the device
- **Avoid** tight clothing
- Talk to the doctor about arm restrictions (may be up to 4 weeks)

Pain Control and Medicines

- Use Tylenol® or ibuprofen for mild pain
- You may be prescribed other medicines for stronger pain
- Use an ice pack to reduce swelling
- Take your antibiotics for 3 days (to prevent infection)

Follow-Up

- Return **for wound check** in 1-2 weeks.
- Device **clinics check** at 6-8 weeks.
- After that, check-ups every **6–12 months.**
- Send **remote device data every 3 months.**

Electrical Safety

Avoid

- Working under the hood of a running car
- Electrocautery (used in surgery/dental work): Tell your child's doctor about the pacemaker before procedures
- Arc welding
- Keep magnetic snaps or badges 6 inches away from your pacemaker

Use with Caution

- **MRI scans:** Talk with your doctor before.
- **Cell phones/headphones:** We suggest keeping devices at least 6 inches from your pacemaker.
- **Store security system:** Walk through normally and don't linger.
- **Airport security:** These often do not affect the pacemaker so you can walk through like normal (if you have any concerns, show your Medical Device ID card)
- **TENS therapy:** Talk with your doctor—it should be okay except never on or near the pacemaker
- **Therapeutic radiation**
- **Certain roller coasters:** Some are powered by strong magnets and are best to avoid

Safe Devices

- Microwave ovens
- Hair dryers
- Electric blankets/jackets (keep batteries 6" from chest)
- Computers, TVs, radios

Your Device ID Card

Your **permanent ID card** will arrive within a few weeks.

When to Call

Call if you notice any symptoms after ICD placement or generator change such as:

- Redness, swelling, tenderness, warmth, or drainage at the wound
- Fever over 101.4°F or chills
- Dizziness
- Palpitations
- Fainting
- Lightheadedness
- Fatigue
- Persistent hiccups
- Pale or bluish/gray skin tone

Who to Call

If you have questions, please contact your provider through MyChart or call your provider listed in your After Visit Summary or After Hospital Care Plan. For a list of UW Health Clinics, visit www.uwhealth.org/

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright © 12/2025 University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing HF# 8462