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## Implantable Defibrillator Support (ICD) Group

This support group is a voluntary group set up in association with the Irish Heart Foundation to assist patients with ICDs and their families. The support group wishes to create more understanding and awareness of the technology in Ireland so that people with the device can be helped and supported in their communities. The group holds an annual information day. All committee members have ICDs and are available to offer advice and support via the Irish Heart Foundation.

If you would like to contact a member of the committee, please contact the Irish Heart Foundation 01 6685001 or visit [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie) for contact details.

### Useful Web Links:

**Implantable Defibrillator Support Group**  
Contact the Irish Heart Foundation 01 6685001 or visit [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie) for contact details.

**British Heart Foundation:** [www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

You can download a very comprehensive book on ICDs from the publications section of British Heart Foundation's web site.

- **Irish Cardiomyopathy Support Group**
  - **Irish Sudden Cardiac Death in the young Support Group**
  - **Irish Long QT Syndrome Support Group**
- All of these support groups are also affiliated to the Irish Heart Foundation. Further information can be obtained via [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie) or by contacting 01 6685001
- British Cardiomyopathy Association:**  
[www.cardiomyopathy.org](http://www.cardiomyopathy.org)
- UK ICD Support Group:** [www.icdsupport.org.uk](http://www.icdsupport.org.uk)
- UK Sudden Adult Death Syndrome Support Group:**  
[www.sadsuk.org](http://www.sadsuk.org)

**Irish Heart Foundation Helpline—1890 432 787**

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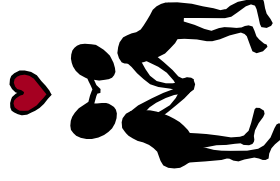


## Implantable Defibrillator (ICD) Support Group

### IMPORTANT TIPS

- Remember, the ICD is there to improve your quality of life
- Let your family & friends know about your ICD & what to do if you get a shock
- Always carry your ICD card with you
- If you are having any medical treatment, tell the medical staff that you have an ICD
- Keep your regular ICD check-up appointments
- Take all of the medicines you've been prescribed

### BE ACTIVE & ENJOY LIFE



## Information and Support for People with ICDs.

The Irish Heart Foundation is the only national voluntary organisation working to reduce the number of people who die prematurely from heart disease and to improve the quality of care for those living with heart disease and stroke.

Irish Heart Foundation  
4 Clyde Road  
Ballsbridge  
Dublin 4  
Tel: 01 6685001  
Fax: 01 6685896  
Web: [www.irishheart.ie](http://www.irishheart.ie)

In association with the  
Irish Heart Foundation



## What is an ICD?

An Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) is a small electrical device that monitors the rhythm of your heartbeat. When it detects an abnormal rhythm (arrhythmia) it acts to restore normal rhythm. It may act like a pacemaker when the heart is beating too fast or too slow, delivering a series of electrical impulses, this is known as "pacing". It may deliver a bigger electrical shock to remedy more serious abnormalities.

ICDs are generally implanted in people who have had a heart rhythm problem or possibly even a cardiac arrest.

However sometimes people who have not had a heart problem, but are considered at risk of developing a serious heart arrhythmia may have the device inserted as a precaution.



An ICD contains a battery-powered electronic circuit. It is inserted under the skin, near the shoulder. Electrode leads connect the ICD to the inside of the heart. The battery lasts 4-6 years after which a new unit will be inserted.

## What causes an abnormal heart rhythm?

The heart's electrical system regulates a normal rhythmic heart beat of 60-100 beats per minute. Abnormal heart rhythms (arrhythmias) are caused by problems with this electrical system. The heartbeat may be too slow or too fast, steady or chaotic. Some arrhythmias are dangerous and can cause sudden cardiac death, while others are bothersome but are not life-threatening. The deadliest forms of arrhythmias come from the heart's lower chambers.

## Types of Arrhythmia

### Ventricular Tachycardia

When the heartbeat is too fast and the abnormal beat is coming from the heart's lower chambers, this is called ventricular tachycardia (VT). These abnormal and rapid beats stop the heart from filling properly with blood between beats. During VT you may feel your heart pound or feel dizzy or faint. People with VT usually have other serious heart disease, but occasionally it can be experienced by people with otherwise normal hearts. People experiencing VT need to be treated quickly as these type of arrhythmia can be very dangerous, even life-threatening.

## Ventricular Fibrillation

During ventricular fibrillation (VF) the heart beat is chaotic and unstable. VF can happen very suddenly and without warning. During VF the heart can't pump oxygen-rich blood to the body's brain and other vital organs. VF is also known as cardiac arrest.

## Ventricular Bradycardia

When the heart beats too slowly to meet the demands of the body, this is called bradycardia. If this happens it can cause dizziness, fatigue or fainting because the heart is not providing enough oxygen-rich blood to the body.

## What will happen to me when the ICD delivers a shock?

You may experience a number of different sensations.

You may feel an abnormal heart rhythm before the ICD treats the rhythm disturbance.

When the ICD is pacing the heart, treating a fast rhythm, you may experience a painless fluttering feeling. If this treatment is unsuccessful, the ICD will deliver an electric shock.

If the ICD has to deliver a low-level electric shock it can feel like a thump on the chest and be mildly uncomfortable.

In the case of more serious rhythm disturbances you may feel dizzy or faint shortly before the shock is delivered and then experience a stronger sensation of being hit really hard on the chest as the rhythm is corrected.

Once the ICD has delivered its treatment and the heart rhythm has been restored you may wish to rest for a short while. You do not need to go to hospital right away.

Phone your hospital to tell them you've had a shock and they will arrange to check your ICD at your convenience.

If you still feel unwell after the ICD has delivered a shock or the ICD gives you a series of shocks, you should contact the emergency services immediately.

Everyone's experience of ICD treatment will be different. The intensity and frequency of treatment will vary from person to person. Some people experience many shocks in a year while others may never feel the treatment.

## Living with an ICD

### Getting back to work

When you can resume work will depend on the seriousness of your heart problem, your age and if you have any other illnesses. If you have an ICD solely as a precaution, you can probably return to work almost immediately. If you have had serious heart problem, recovery may take at least 6 weeks. If you are a bus or heavy goods vehicle driver, you will need to tell your employers that you have heart problems and have an ICD. Depending on the seriousness of your heart illness, if your job is very physically demanding or stressful, you may need to change how you work or the type of work you do.

### Driving

Currently there is no Irish legislation regarding driving with an ICD implanted. If you have a history of collapse, there will be driving restrictions. Your Cardiologist will discuss this with you.

### Sports and Physical Activity

Walking and other exercise is good for you. In general you should avoid contact sports and activities that could damage your ICD or be dangerous should the ICD deliver a shock (such as climbing a ladder). The level of physical activity that is safe will vary depending on your particular heart condition. Please discuss with your Cardiologist.

### Travel

Air travel is permitted for people with ICDs, however airport metal detectors can cause some electrical interference. You should inform airport security staff that you have an ICD and show your official (long version) ICD card.

### Electro-magnetic Interference (EMI)

Any electro-magnetic field may cause interference with your ICD. In general, all household equipment can be used, including microwaves and computers. Mobile phones should be used on the opposite side of your ICD and shouldn't be carried in your breast pocket. At entrances to shops and other facilities with electronic security systems, walk normally through the theft detection systems. Don't stop close to the equipment, otherwise it is quite safe. Avoid wearing magnetic bracelets or magnets near your chest. Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) testing is not allowed with an ICD.