

Awaiting assessment for an ICD (Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator)

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio tape or computer disk, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please telephone the PALS desk on 01271 314090.

What is an ICD?

ICD stands for implantable cardioverter defibrillator. It is slightly larger than a small matchbox and is connected to your heart by one or more leads. The ICD, which contains a battery and electronic circuit, is usually implanted under the skin in your upper chest, with the leads passed along a blood vessel to your heart. The ICD constantly monitors your heart rate and rhythm, and can deliver 3 types of treatment; anti-bradycardia pacing and/or anti-tachycardia pacing and/or electrical shock as required.

Why might I need an ICD?

You might need an ICD if you have, or are likely to have, an abnormal, fast heart rhythm, as this could cause you to become unwell. It could even cause your heart to stop beating.

Your cardiologist will refer you to a specialist centre to assess if you are suitable for ICD implantation.

What can the ICD do?

The ICD can be programmed to deliver the following treatments:

- **Anti-bradycardia pacing** – If your heart rhythm is too slow, it can stimulate your heart to increase the rate slightly.
- **Anti-tachycardia pacing (ATP)** – The ICD delivers a series of short, low-voltage electrical impulses (paced beats) at a fast rate. This often corrects your heart rhythm. This does not involve an electrical shock.
- **Electrical shock / defibrillation** – If your heart rhythm is very abnormal, it can deliver a short, high-energy shock to your heart. This is potentially life-saving.

Can the ICD programme be changed?

The device will be programmed to the best settings for you, but can be modified during your appointments in the follow-up clinic if necessary.

There may be times when it would be suitable to turn off certain functions of your ICD, such as prior to surgery.

Are there any unpleasant effects from having an ICD?

Many people find no unpleasant effects from their ICD, while others have reported various feelings.

The impulses felt will differ according to the treatment:

- **Anti-bradycardia pacing** – these impulses are very small and are not usually noticed
- **Anti-tachycardia pacing** – these impulses may also go unnoticed, but can sometimes lead to feeling palpitations or dizziness
- **Electrical shock / defibrillation** shocks – these can be quite painful, like being thumped or kicked in the chest, but the pain will only last for a few seconds

Are there any restrictions?

Driving:

After the ICD has been implanted and activated, you would not be allowed to drive for a period of between one and six months, depending on why you need it. Further information can be obtained from the DVLA website.

You will also need to inform your insurance company if you have an ICD fitted.

Travel:

You can safely travel abroad, but are advised to inform the security staff and show them the ICD identification card that you will have been given.

You will need to inform your travel insurance company. Some travel companies may need written confirmation from your consultant that you are fit to travel.

What will happen next?

Your cardiologist has referred you to a centre where you will be assessed for an ICD (usually the Royal Devon & Exeter Hospital).

You will be offered an appointment with a consultant, who may request further investigations as part of the assessment. If an ICD is deemed suitable, the consultant will explain the procedure for fitting the device and talk through the risks before asking for your consent.

If you have given your consent, you will be asked to go back to the hospital at a later date to have the device implanted. You will be sent a letter informing you of a date for procedure.

Further information

Arrhythmia Care Coordinator – 01271 311633

Heart Failure Team – Nurse specialists 01271 311633

Cardiac physiologist – 01271 322745

British Heart Foundation – Telephone: 020 7935 0185

Website: www.bhf.org.uk

Arrhythmia Alliance - Telephone: 01789 450787

Website: www.arrythmiaalliance.org.uk

Driving and Vehicle Licensing Agency – Telephone: 0300 790 6806

Website: www.dft.gov.uk/dvla/medical/ata glance.aspx

References

NICE (2006) Implantable cardioverter defibrillators (ICDs) for arrhythmias. Understanding NICE guidance – information for people with arrhythmias, their families and carers, and the public.

NICE (2014) Implantable cardioverter defibrillators and cardiac resynchronization therapy for arrhythmias and heart failure (review of TA95 and TA120)

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or e-mail ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

‘Care Opinion’ comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

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