

Implantable Cardioverter-Defibrillator Discharge Information

What is an implantable cardioverter-defibrillator?

Every normal heartbeat starts in a group of special pacemaker cells in the upper right chamber of the heart. These cells send a regular electrical signal that causes the heart to contract (squeeze) and push blood into other parts of the heart and out to the body. An implantable cardioverter-defibrillator (ICD) may be used for people who have had very fast and unstable heart rhythms that cause the heart to not pump properly, or people who have had ventricular fibrillation or cardiac arrest in the past. It may also be used for people who have severe heart failure, whose heart cannot pump enough blood to the body.

An ICD is a small device (machine) that uses wires (called leads) to deliver an electrical signal by a small electrical shock to the heart, causing the heart to beat and pump blood out to the body. People with ICD's may feel the shock, but it is usually not painful. The ICD leads are put into one or more chambers of the heart through a large vein in the upper chest. The leads are then connected to the battery operated ICD. The ICD is then placed under the skin of the chest or upper abdomen. Batteries need to be changed about every 5 to 10 years.

How can I take care of myself when I go home?

How long it takes to get better depends on the cause of your irregular heart rhythm, how well you recover, your overall health, and any complications you may have.

Management

- Your provider will give you a list of your medicines when you leave the hospital.
 - Know your medicines. Know what they look like, how much you should take each time, how often you should take them, and why you take each one.
 - Take your medicines exactly as your provider tells you to.
 - Carry a list of your medicines in your wallet or purse. Include any nonprescription medicines and supplements on the list.
- Ask your provider if you should take aspirin. Low-dose aspirin therapy reduces the risk of stroke for women. For men, aspirin has been found to lower the risk of a first-time heart attack.
- Your provider may prescribe medicine to:
 - Treat pain
 - Treat or prevent an infection
 - Help prevent blood clots
 - Slow the heart rate and reduce the workload of the heart
 - Relax and widen blood vessels and allow blood to flow through them easier

- Control cholesterol levels
- Reduce fluid build-up and swelling in the body
- To care for your ICD insertion site:
 - Keep your incision clean.
 - If you are told to change the dressing on your incision, wash your hands before changing the dressing and after disposing of the dressing.

Appointments

- Follow your provider's instructions for follow-up appointments and routine tests.
- Keep appointments for all routine testing you may need.
- Talk with your provider about any questions or fears you have.

Diet, Exercise, and Other Lifestyle Changes

- Follow the treatment plan your healthcare provider prescribes.
- Get plenty of rest while you're recovering. Try to get at least 7 to 9 hours of sleep each night.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Drink enough fluids to keep your urine light yellow in color, unless you are told to limit fluids.
- Exercise as your provider recommends.
- Don't smoke. Smoking can worsen poor blood circulation.
- Lose weight if you need to and keep a healthy weight.
- Find ways to make your life less stressful.
- Follow activity restrictions, such as not driving or operating machinery, as recommended by your healthcare provider or pharmacist, especially if you are taking pain medicines or muscle relaxants.

Call emergency medical services or 911 if you have new or worsening:

- Chest discomfort (pressure, fullness, squeezing or pain) that lasts more than a few minutes or goes away and comes back or chest discomfort that goes to your arms, neck, jaw or back
- Trouble breathing
- Weakness, numbness, tingling or pain in your face, arm, or leg, especially on one side of your body

Do not drive yourself if you have any of these symptoms.

Call your healthcare provider if you have new or worsening:

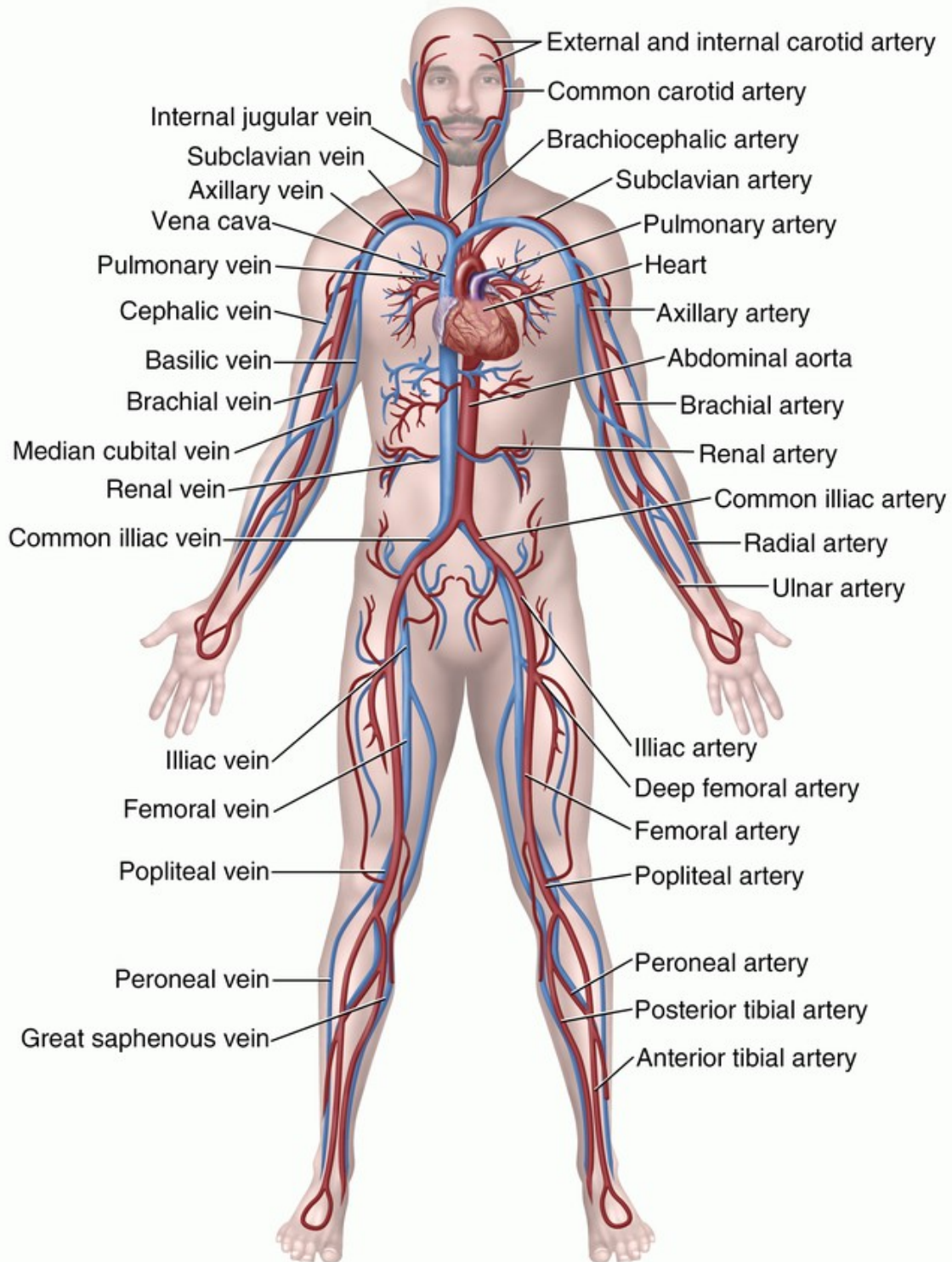
- Fast, slow, or irregular heartbeat
- Numbness in your arm or hand on the same side as the pacemaker insertion site
- Signs of infection around your surgical wound. These include:
 - The area around your wound is more red or painful
 - Your wound area is very warm to touch

- You have blood, pus, or other fluid coming from the wound area
- You have a fever higher than 101.5° F (38.6° C)
- You have chills or muscle aches

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Circulatory System



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