Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center
A teaching hospital of Harvard Medical School
330 Brookline Avenue
Boston, MA 02215
www.bidmc.harvard.edu

information

Internal cardiac defibrillator (ICD)

Patient discharge instructions

If you have questions that are not answered by these instructions, please call your nurse or doctor.

You have had a special device implanted to help protect you if you have a dangerous heart rhythm. The device is called an ICD (internal cardiac defibrillator). This sheet contains important instructions regarding your ICD. If you have any questions, please be sure to ask your doctor or nurse.

☏ To reach a nurse or doctor about your ICD

Device clinic nurse: 617-667-9383 (Weekdays)
The device clinic is located on the east campus of BIDMC, on the 7th floor of the Shapiro Building.

EP doctor on call: 617-667-4700, page the EP doctor (evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays)

How should I take care of my incision?

→ You should keep the incision dry. You may take a tub bath or sponge bath as long as the incision does not get wet. Please do not shower until you are seen in the device clinic for your appointment. This is about one week after your procedure. Please **do not** try to put bandages or Saran Wrap over the incision in order to shower. If any moisture gets into the wound, it can lead to serious infection.

→ You may take the dressing off when you get home if you wish. If you are more comfortable with the incision covered, use a dry sterile gauze over the area.

→ Do not apply lotion or powder to the incision.

→ You might have slight itching at the incision. Try not to scratch the incision or rub it.

If you have been told your have "heart failure"

Heart failure is a condition that reduces the heart's ability to pump blood. Because of heart failure, the heart cannot pump enough blood to supply the body's need for oxygen. As a result, fluid may build up and you may experience shortness of breath, swelling of the feet and legs, and weight gain.

As a patient with heart failure, you should:

- weigh yourself every morning
- follow a low salt diet (2 grams of sodium or less per day)
- take medication as prescribed

You should call your doctor or nurse if you notice:

- weight gain of more than 3 pounds
- worsening shortness of breath
- swelling of the feet or legs

- You may see small paper strips across the incision. Please allow these to fall off on their own. (This may take several weeks.)

- Let someone in the device clinic **(617)-667-9383** know right away if there are signs of infection to the area, including:
    - redness
    - swelling
    - drainage
    - fever – temperature of 101 or more
    - pain that is getting worse instead of better
    - any opening in the skin at the site of the device

- If needed, you may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 6 hours for discomfort. Never take more than 4 grams (4,000 mgs.) of acetaminophen in 24 hours. If your discomfort is severe or is not relieved by acetaminophen, please call us.

May I go back to my usual activities?

Please follow these guidelines regarding activity. Ask questions about any other activities you aren't sure about.

- You may be asked not to **drive** for a certain amount of time during your recovery. This is different for everyone. Please ask your doctor when you may drive.

- During the first 6-8 weeks, you will need to watch how you use the arm on the implant side. Do not raise the arm above the height of your shoulder. You may not swim or play tennis or golf. You may wash your face, brush your teeth, shave, and comb your hair as usual. This is a good time to ask for help with things like raking leaves, cleaning, painting, ironing, vacuuming, or walking a dog.

- For 6 weeks, don't lift or carry anything that weighs more than 5 pounds.

What medicines should I take?

- Make sure your doctor knows about everything you have been taking at home, including prescription medicines, non-prescription medicines, vitamins, herbs, and supplements. Please talk to your nurses and your doctor before you leave the hospital to make sure you understand what you should and should not take once you are home.

- You will be given a prescription for antibiotics to take for a short time when you get home.

- If you are on warfarin (Coumadin), you are likely to need a blood test within 5 days of discharge. Please be sure to ask if you aren't sure when your next blood test should be.

Use of electronic and other equipment

- Because of your ICD, **you should never have an MRI** (magnetic resonance imaging) to any part of your body. MRI is a special test that uses a magnet to look inside the body. Exposure to the MRI magnet can ruin the ICD lead, causing it to malfunction.

- Arc welding is not allowed.

- You may use a microwave oven. You may use cellphones, remote control and other electronic devices, but these must be held at least one foot from the ICD.

- Please do not walk through security gates at airports. Show your ID card to the security personnel and go around the gate. Although unlikely, the gate could cause your device to malfunction.

- Do not allow security personnel to put a scanning wand within one foot of your device. It is ok for them to use the wand on your body, but it needs to stay one foot away from where your ICD is implanted.

What happens if I get a shock from my ICD?

Most patients feel the ICD if it gives a shock. Fortunately, it is very quick, but it can be uncomfortable. Some people say it feels like being kicked in the chest, but it lasts less than a second.

You will want to inform your doctor if your device gives you a shock. If there is more than one shock or if you have symptoms, you need immediate attention. Please follow these guidelines when deciding what kind of help you need.

- If you get a shock but don't have any symptoms such as dizziness, palpitations, chest pain, shortness of breath, or fatigue, you should call us at **617-667-9383** right away to report the shock. Arrangements will be made for you to be seen in the clinic the next business day.

- If you get a shock and feel poorly in any way, or if you get more than one shock, you should call 911 and go to the emergency room.

Other important information

- You will receive a defibrillator identification card in 4-8 weeks. You should carry it with you at all times.

- You should also carry a list of your medications, a brief summary of your medical history, a list of any allergies, and your doctors' phone numbers.

- Be sure to always tell any doctor, dentist, or other health care provider who treats you that you have an implanted defibrillator.

- You will receive information in the mail about a support group in the Longwood Medical Area for patients who have an ICD.

- You may wish to purchase a medical identification bracelet or necklace that informs anyone caring for you that you have an ICD.

How can I reach a nurse or doctor if I have a question?

On weekdays, a nurse at the pacemaker/device clinic is available to answer your questions. The phone number appears on the front of this sheet. You may also call your own EP doctor. On evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays, you may call the EP physician on call.

Follow-up appointments

You will need to be seen one week after discharge, then again 2 months after discharge, and then every 3-6 months.

Appointments: _____

_____

_____

Call for help if you have:

- redness, swelling, drainage, or any opening at the area of your incision
- temperature of 101 or more
- pain from the incision that is getting worse instead of better
- a shock from your device (call 911 if you get more than one shock or have symptoms along with the shock)

Note: You underwent a procedure preformed under fluoroscopic (x-ray) guidance. Procedures involving lengthy exposures to x-rays may cause damage to the skin and/or hair. These adverse effects may be increased if one has had previous (especially recent) radiation exposure to the same skin area. Radiation injury to the skin can take many forms, including an area of redness, blistering, hair loss, or ulceration. These effects may appear after a few weeks or even after several months. If any of these occur on the side and back of torso (or elsewhere), please contact the interventional cardiology section at 617-632-7455 to arrange further evaluation.

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