

# You and your ICD

(Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator)



## What is an ICD?

An ICD is a small device that can pick up and track life-threatening heart rhythms.

## How does an ICD work?

The ICD is fitted in your chest and is always checking your heart beat. It can correct your heart's rate and rhythm and if needed will deliver a shock if your heart is at risk of cardiac arrest.

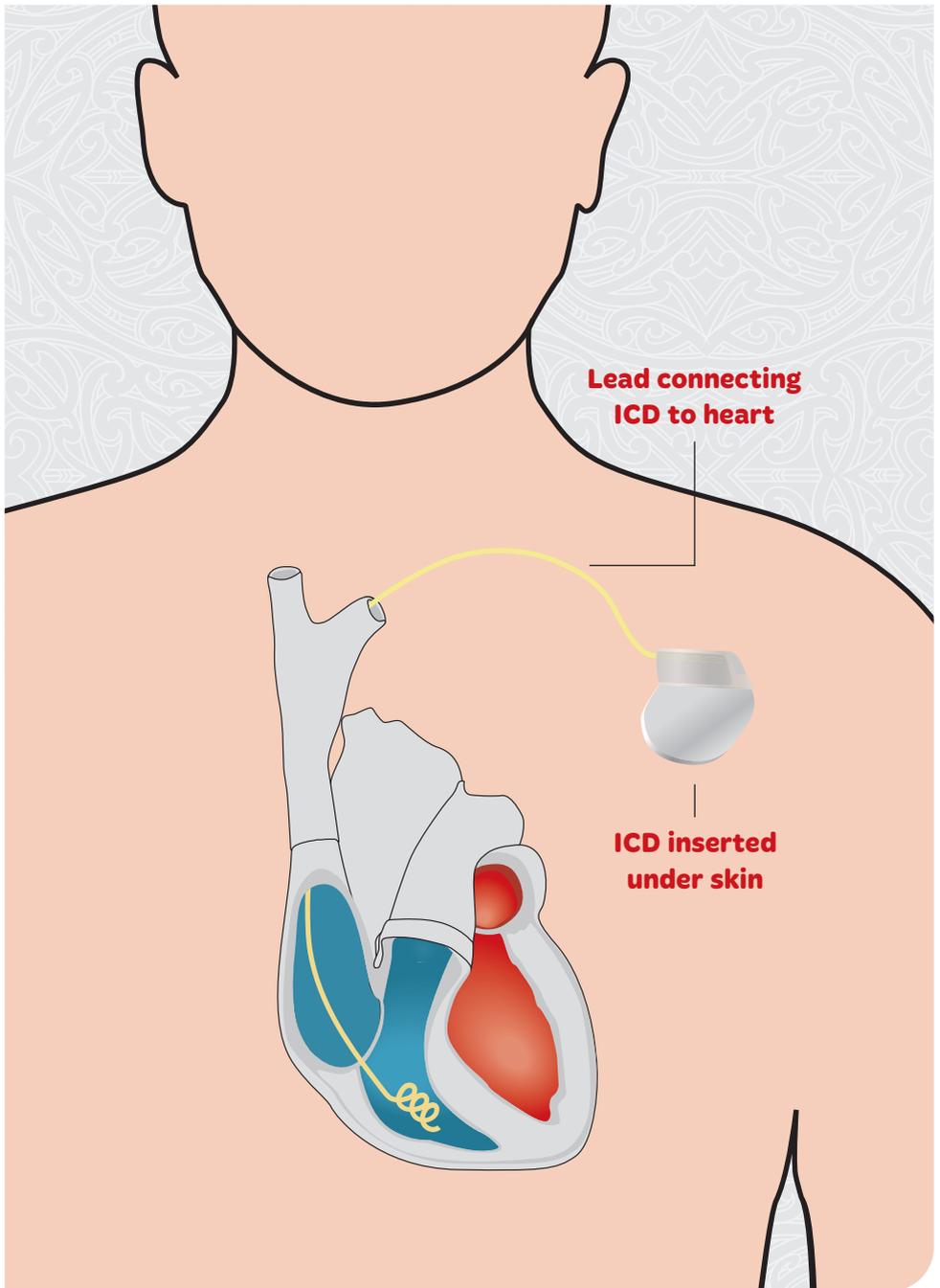
**An ICD is small enough to sit in the palm of your hand**



## How is an ICD put in?

This is done in hospital. You'll be given medication to help you relax. You will also get an injection to numb the area. It shouldn't be painful, but you may feel some sensation in the area. Some people may have a general anaesthetic.

For some people this is a day procedure. Others may have to stay longer. Either way, you'll need someone to drive you home.



Your ICD will be programmed according to your condition. Depending on your needs, it may have one, two or three leads.

## The first six weeks

You'll probably feel sore for the first few days after the ICD is inserted. It's important not to pick at the glue or stitches that have been used to close the skin.

Go straight to the doctor if:

- **you have symptoms like the ones you had before the ICD was put in**
- **you have hiccupping or twitching in your chest area**
- **you have a racing heart**
- **the wound gets red, swollen, hot, painful, or it leaks.**

It takes a few weeks for the ICD wires to become fully secure, so during that time avoid heavy lifting or lifting your arm high above your shoulder. Be careful when you wash your hair or get dressed. Remember to take your time and move your arm slowly.

You may need help for some tasks, like:



Avoid sport and exercise that involve arm movements, like swimming and golf. Cardiac rehabilitation classes and local cardiac support groups can help your recovery.



“My ICD gives me a real sense of security and it lets me do things I haven't done since I started getting heart rhythm problems.”

**Jo**

# Everyday life with your ICD

For most people an ICD doesn't interfere with everyday life. Many people feel safer knowing they have an ICD to help their heart if needed.

## Work and leisure activities

Some people may need to make changes to their work or leisure activities. Discuss this with your specialist.

## Driving

Talk to your doctor and insurance company about how soon you can drive again.

## Mobile Phone

Keep your mobile phone and earbuds 15cm away from your ICD. Use the opposite ear and pocket.

## What happens when the ICD is activated?

Normally you won't feel the ICD working. If your heart is in danger of stopping, your ICD will give you a shock. Before this happens, some people feel dizzy, have a racing heart or collapse. The shock will feel like a thump, or a kick in your chest or back.

Rest for a while after the shock has been delivered. If you continue to feel unwell ask someone to drive you to the hospital or call an ambulance.

## Follow up clinic appointments

Your ICD will need regular checks to make sure it's working properly. The battery usually lasts five to seven years. It will need to be replaced in hospital.

## **ID card**

You'll get an ICD identification card. Carry this and a list of your medications at all times, especially for health-related appointments and when you're travelling. You may like to consider getting a Medic Alert bracelet.

## **Security scanners**

Be prepared to show your ID card if you need to walk through a metal detector (for example at an airport). Don't let security staff put handheld scanners directly over your ICD. Walk quickly through full body scanners.

## **Other things to be aware of**

Read the instructions that come with your ICD, they will tell you about what you should avoid. Being too close to magnetic fields may affect or disable your ICD, so you'll need to avoid:

- **Magna-sleeps electric blankets**
- **CB radio equipment**
- **loudspeakers (must be 30cm away)**
- **magnetic bracelets**
- **electrolysis for hair removal**
- **electric arc welders**
- **high power radar or electrical installations in close range.**

## **For more information**

To find out more visit [heartfoundation.org.nz/icd](https://heartfoundation.org.nz/icd), or to speak to a nurse about your condition, call our Heart Helpline **0800 863 375**.

As a charity we thank our generous donors for helping bring this resource to life.

**heartfoundation.org.nz**

The National Heart Foundation of New Zealand is a registered charity (CC23052) under the Charities Act 2005.

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