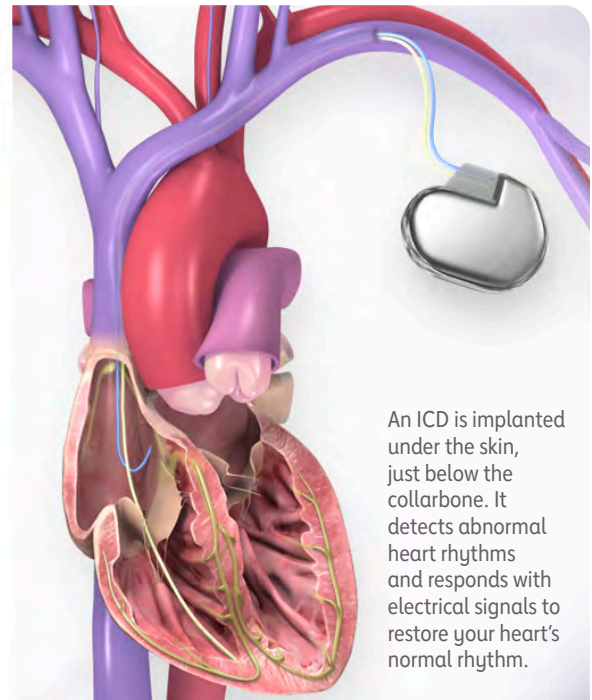




## What Is an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD)?

An ICD is a battery-powered device surgically placed under the skin in the chest area. It reads the electrical signals in your heart to keep track of your heart rate and rhythm. If the ICD detects an abnormal heartbeat, it can deliver an electric pulse or shock to your heart. This helps restore a normal heartbeat.

ICDs are useful in preventing sudden death in people who have a high risk of a life-threatening ventricular arrhythmia (abnormal heart rhythm).



An ICD is implanted under the skin, just below the collarbone. It detects abnormal heart rhythms and responds with electrical signals to restore your heart's normal rhythm.

### How do ICDs work?

- The ICD is connected to your heart by one or more very fine wires, called leads, that attach to one or more of the chambers in your heart.
- Electrical signals from your heart travel up the leads to the ICD, so it can read your heart rate and rhythm.
- When the ICD detects an irregular heartbeat, it helps return the heartbeat to normal by sending tiny electric shocks through the leads to the heart chambers.
- It works 24 hours a day.

### How do I live with an ICD?

Visit your health care professional regularly. ICD batteries last up to about 7 years. Your health care professional should check them every 3 to 6 months or as directed by your health care team.

Talk to your health care team about your activities. Ask them what you can and cannot do. Also, ask what types of machines or equipment you should avoid. Those with magnets and strong electrical fields may disrupt its operation.

You should also:

- Tell airport security guards that you have an ICD. Ask them not to use handheld metal detectors on you.
- Tell your other health care professionals, including your dentist, that you have an ICD.
- Tell the doctors and nurses that you have one anytime you go to the hospital.
- Always carry a card with the details about your ICD and emergency contact information. This lets others know that you have an ICD in the event of a medical emergency.

### Can I use a cellphone or microwave oven?

In general, microwave ovens, electric blankets, remote controls for TV and other common household appliances and electronics won't affect your ICD. Even though these devices may pose little known risk, try to keep all motors and antennae at least 6 inches away from your ICD.

You can also use a cellphone if you take these steps:

- Hold the phone to the ear on the side of your body opposite from your ICD.

(continued)



## What Is an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD)?

- When your phone is on, try to keep it at least 6 inches away from your ICD. For example, don't carry your phone in your breast pocket over your ICD.
- Speak with your health care professional for more information about cellphones and your ICD.

### What if I'm anxious about living with my ICD?

It isn't uncommon for people to feel anxious or depressed, especially in the first months or year after they get their ICD. You need to know that you are not alone or without support. If you have these feelings, consult with your health care team and get help.

Research has shown that ICDs can extend life and improve quality of life. You may feel less anxious living with an ICD by understanding more about the device and what to expect from having it.



If you have an ICD, hold your cellphone to the ear on the side of your body opposite from your ICD.

## HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit [heart.org](https://heart.org) to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at [HeartInsight.org](https://HeartInsight.org).
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at [SupportNetwork.heart.org](https://SupportNetwork.heart.org).

### Do you have questions for your doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write down questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

**Does the shock hurt?**

**Can I swim?**

### MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk of heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit [heart.org/AnswersByHeart](https://heart.org/AnswersByHeart) to learn more.