



The Heart Rhythm Charity

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Subcutaneous Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (S-ICD)

What is an S-ICD?

S-ICD stands for Subcutaneous Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator. If your doctor has suggested that you need an S-ICD you may have experienced or may be at risk of experiencing an abnormal, fast heart rhythm. The S-ICD can recognise and monitor your heart rhythm and can deliver electrical therapy, if required to shock your heart back into normal rhythm. The S-ICD is made up of a box shaped device which contains a battery and electronic circuits and is placed under the skin on the left side of your chest. An electrode is placed under the skin along side the breast bone and connected to the S-ICD generator.

What is the difference between an S-ICD and an ICD?

An Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator, ICD, has lead(s) placed into your heart whereas the S-ICD does not. Also, a very small number of patients are not technically suitable for the S-ICD, and some patients may need certain functions of a normal ICD (e.g. anti-tachycardia pacing) that the S-ICD cannot provide. The implanting doctor will be able to advise regarding this.

Function of S-ICD

The S-ICD monitors your heart rhythm all the time. If it detects that your heart is running faster than it should in a dangerous rhythm, a ventricular tachycardia or ventricular fibrillation, the S-ICD will deliver a shock, defibrillation, to bring it back to a normal rhythm. If your heart beats too slowly after the shock, the S-ICD can deliver pacing pulses to bring it back to your normal rate.

How is an S-ICD fitted?

The procedure is performed under general anaesthesia or with local anaesthesia and sedation. The S-ICD generator is connected to an electrode which is placed under the skin. Your doctor may test the system during the procedure

to ensure that it is working correctly. The implant should take between 45 and 60 minutes. Any stitches that may need to be subsequently removed will be done at your GP's surgery.

What happens after an S-ICD has been fitted?

You will probably be allowed to go home the next day provided that your S-ICD has been checked and there are no complications. You will be given an S-ICD identity card, emergency information and instructions at this point. You will also be given a helpline number should you have any questions or queries later on. Normally, an S-ICD battery will last for around 5 years and the replacement procedure usually involves changing the S-ICD generator, but not the electrode.

Will I feel anything different?

Some patients have reported that having a shock feels like they have been suddenly kicked or punched in the chest with some pain lasting only a few seconds. Other patients have reported no pain following a shock. However, if you do feel unwell after a shock, or if you have received several shocks, please dial 999 for an ambulance. Show the ambulance service your S-ICD identity card along with the emergency instructions that you were given. In this way the ambulance service will know exactly which device you have implanted and the best course of action. You must always contact your S-ICD centre if you think that you have received a shock.

What about driving?

There may be some restrictions on driving; you can access DVLA guidelines on:

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Motoring/DriverLicensing/MedicalRulesForDrivers/index.htm>

You do not need to inform the DVLA that you have had an ICD implanted if it has been fitted for primary prevention reasons. However you must inform your insurance company.

For further information contact Arrhythmia Alliance



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