

Implanted Cardiac Defibrillators

What patients should know when there is a device advisory or recall.

Are Implanted Cardiac Defibrillators (ICDs) safe?

ICDs are very safe devices. Malfunctions and failures are very rare. An ICD is a device that continuously monitors the heart rhythm and delivers life-saving shocks if a dangerous heart rhythm is detected.

If my ICD malfunctions, am I in danger?

ICD failures are rare. The ICD device, even if it fails to work properly, generally does not harm the person. However, if a device fails to recognize a dangerous rhythm, a life-saving shock might not be provided to restore the heart's normal rhythm.

Should my ICD be replaced?

Not all ICDs that have been the subject of an FDA recall or advisory need to be replaced. Some devices may require reprogramming. Your heart rhythm specialist may advise you to check your ICD more often than usual, either at home, over the telephone, or in the office. You will need to check with your heart rhythm specialist to determine what type of follow up may be needed. The small risks associated with replacing the device may still be much higher than the risk your device will malfunction. The pros and cons of replacement should be discussed with your heart rhythm specialist.

What should I do at this point?

Every patient with an ICD should have a clear plan for regular follow up with their heart rhythm specialist. This follow-up may take place as an office visit, or using telephone-based or other remote monitoring. If you have any questions about your ICD follow-up plan, or have any other concerns about your ICD, contact your heart rhythm specialist.

For more information

For more information on ICD's, see the Heart Rhythm Society's patient information piece on ICDs at www.HRSpatients.org under Treatments.

For more information on heart rhythm disorders, risk factors, tests, and treatment options, visit the Heart Rhythm Society's website at www.HRSpatients.org

The above information was obtained from the Heart Rhythm Society.