



The Heart Rhythm Charity

Arrhythmia Alliance
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Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy (CRT) - Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD)

What is a Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy (CRT) device?

CRT devices are used to treat heart failure and can be a permanent pacemaker with or without an Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD). They aim to improve the heart's pumping function but only show an improvement in symptoms of heart failure (such as breathlessness) in around 75% of people implanted with these devices.

CRT-Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD)

You may have had a dangerous heart rhythm before, or you may be at risk of one in the future due to an underlying heart condition. In this case your doctor may recommend that you are fitted with an ICD instead of a pacemaker. An ICD can recognise and monitor your heart rhythm, and will administer an electric shock if your heart rhythm becomes dangerously fast.

CRT-ICDs work like traditional ICDs but involve having an additional pacing lead implanted on the left side of the heart. In heart failure the left side of the heart may not pump at the same time as the right, meaning the two sides of the heart lose their coordination. The additional pacing lead can help restore the heart's coordination and make the heart beat more efficiently.

It is important to note that the implant is NOT a replacement for your heart failure medication.

How is a CRT-ICD fitted?

Depending on what you and your consultant decide is the best option; the procedure will either be performed under a general anaesthetic, or with a local anaesthetic and sedation. A slim, box-shaped device which contains a battery and electronic circuits is usually placed below your collarbone, usually on the left-hand side. This is connected to small leads which pass through a vein into three sites in the heart. The doctor may test the device during the procedure to ensure it is working correctly. Any stitches that may need to be subsequently removed will be done at your GP surgery.

What happens after the CRT-ICD has been implanted?

You will probably be allowed to go home the next day, provided your CRT-ICD is checked, there are no complications and your doctor assesses it is safe. It is important that you tell the nurse immediately if you have any pain or discomfort. The wound should be kept dry for 2-3 days, although it is fine to have a bath or a shower with a waterproof dressing over the wound in the early stages. You should try not to lift the arm on the same side as the device (usually the left) for the first two weeks.

You will be given a CRT-ICD identity card with details of the make and model of your CRT-ICD. This card should be kept with you at all times. If you require further treatment in the future it is essential that you show the card to the medical professional who is treating you.

For further information contact Arrhythmia Alliance



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Will I feel the treatment from the CRT-ICD?

The device will be programmed to the best settings for you. The ICD can generate extra beats if the heart is beating too slowly, or get the heart back to a normal rhythm if it is beating too quickly. This is called anti-tachycardia pacing and is usually done so quickly that many people do not notice that it has happened.

If anti-tachycardia pacing is unable to correct your fast heart rhythm then your device may administer a shock. Some patients have reported that having shocks can feel like they have been suddenly kicked or punched in the chest. These shocks can be quite painful but the pain will only last for a few seconds, others may not feel anything.

If you feel unwell after a shock, or if your device has given you several shocks, please

call 999 for an ambulance. Show the paramedics your identity card along with any emergency instructions. This will inform them of exactly which type of CRT-ICD you have and what the best course of action will be.

What about driving?

There will be some restrictions but these will vary depending on why you have had your CRT-ICD fitted. 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 a CRT-ICD implanted if it has been fitted for primary prevention reasons. However you must inform your insurance company.