



## Deactivation of your Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD) or Cardiac Resynchronisation Therapy Defibrillator (CRTD).

### Why have I been given this leaflet?

You either have, or are about to have, an implantable cardiac defibrillator (ICD) or a cardiac resynchronisation defibrillator (CRTD) fitted. The function of the defibrillator is to stop any life threatening arrhythmias if they start. There may come a point in your life when you would prefer not to receive a shock to correct one of these rhythms. This leaflet is designed to help you make an informed choice when considering ICD / CRTD deactivation in the future and to hopefully give you a chance to discuss your wishes with your family and ask any questions you may have regarding this.

### What does deactivation of my defibrillator mean?

It means that the shock function of the device is turned off.

### What is involved in ICD deactivation?

The process is carried out by a cardiac physiologist and is similar to when you have your ICD checked in clinic. A small programming device is placed over your ICD and the settings of the defibrillator are changed so that it will no longer deliver a shock. The procedure is painless and you will not feel any different afterwards. The pacemaker functions of the ICD / CRTD will remain unchanged.

### Who is involved in making the decision?

Usually this will be you in discussion with your healthcare team. This is why we aim to raise this issue well before a decision is urgently needed. It is important that you are aware of this option in the early stages, so that you have time to consider how you feel about deactivation and can play an active part in the decision making process. This ensures that the people involved in your care know and understand your wishes.

Sometimes a decision has to be made as a matter of urgency. If you are not well enough to make this decision at the time then a discussion will take place between your next of kin and the medical team taking care of you. This decision will be made in your best interest and include any of your wishes that are known. The decision may then be made to deactivate your ICD. Discussing your views and preferences



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in advance will help to ensure that any decisions made in an urgent situation are the ones you would have wanted.

In the future, we may refer you to our specialist palliative care team for symptom management and additional support.

## Why is an ICD deactivated?

For some people their quality of life may have deteriorated due to a heart condition or some other long or short term medical illness, and the focus of their care is on comfort rather than prolonging their life. When someone is nearing the end of life there is a risk that their heart is more likely to go into an abnormal rhythm. It is at this point that they may decide that ICD deactivation is the preferable course of action as receiving shocks is unlikely to prolong life and may cause distress for them and their family. Deactivation ahead of this time allows a natural end of life free from shocks.

## Can the ICD be switched back on?

Yes, it is a reversible process and if your condition or wishes change then the defibrillator part of the device can be switched back on.

## If you require further information, please contact:

Cardiac device clinic: 01793 604257 (Monday – Friday 09:00-17:00) (excluding bank holidays).

Heart function specialist nurses team: 01793 604273 (Monday – Friday 08:00–16:00)

Arrhythmia helpline: 01793 604543 (Monday – Friday 08:30–16:30)

(Excluding bank holidays).

Please note that these numbers are likely to go to voicemail, so please leave your name, GWH hospital number (if known) and contact details and someone will get back to you.

## Additional information:

British Heart Foundation - <https://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/heart-matters-magazine/medical/icds-and-end-of-life/icd-deactivation-faqs>

**This information sheet is available to order in other languages and formats. If you would like a copy, please contact us on 01793 604031 or email [gwh.pals@nhs.net](mailto:gwh.pals@nhs.net)**

### Document Control

Division: Unscheduled Care  
Department: Wiltshire Cardiac Centre  
Approved Date: 7 February 2021  
Next Review Date: March 2023  
Document Number: USC - PIL0102