

One way to remember the important steps involved in any significant medical decision is the following memory device:

- N**otify your loved ones of your wishes and document them.
- E**ducate yourself about treatment options.
- E**valuate all of your treatment options.
- D**iscuss your preferences and consider palliative care.
- S**eek mental and spiritual care to aid you in this difficult time

For more information or support

Please contact your local ICD Support Nurse  
or Cardio Respiratory Department.

Contacts details:

## Understanding deactivation of your defibrillator.



What do we mean and why do I have  
to make this decision.

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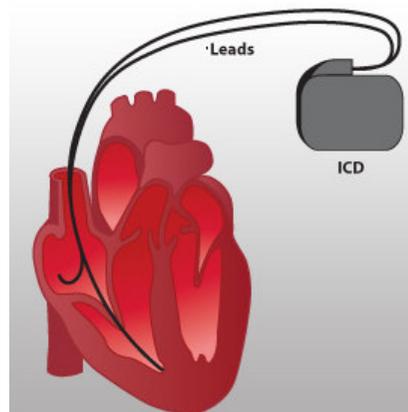
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## Introduction

This leaflet is designed to support you in making an informed decision about switching off the defibrillator function of your Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator (ICD), when defibrillation is no longer appropriate. This will allow you to die peacefully and your family will know that you are comfortable and are not suffering unnecessary therapy.

## About your ICD

An ICD is structurally similar to a pacemaker and inserted underneath the skin, below the collarbone. It consists of a battery connected to wires which are fed through blood vessels and positioned within the heart. This device constantly monitors the heart's activity and has the ability to treat life-threatening rhythms (arrhythmias) from the bottom two chambers of the heart, called Ventricular Tachycardia and Ventricular Fibrillation.



This is achieved in two ways:

- **ATP (Anti Tachycardia Pacing)** - where the device attempts to pace the heart faster than the current rate in order to break the pathway and allow the heart to return to its normal rhythm.
- **DEFIBRILLATION** - an electric shock is delivered to break the pathway and allow the heart to return to its normal rhythm.

It is important to remember the function of the ICD. Although it is able to treat life-threatening heart rhythms, it does not cure the underlying medical conditions that you have, which required the device in the first place. It may reach a stage where your health is deteriorating and although medical treatment has been optimised, your condition continues to deteriorate and it is recognised that you are nearing the end of your life. It would be preferable to consider and discuss adjusting the ICD settings at this point.

## What can happen?

Your ICD is programmed to attempt to correct the rhythms which can lead to death. This can mean that you are at risk of receiving multiple electric shocks, which will be unpleasant and possibly distressing for you and your family. As difficult as it is to discuss these matters, our objective is for you to be comfortable in the remaining time you have left.

It is important to note when you are considering your options, that deactivation of the defibrillation mode does not affect the pacing aspect of your ICD. Therefore, this adjustment in the settings of your device will not end your life but allow for a natural death without the risk of unnecessary electric shocks.

## What do I have to do?

We are here to support and guide you through this difficult decision and if, following discussion with your loved ones and the medical team you decide this course of action is appropriate for you, the procedure would be the same as when you attend the clinic to have your device checked.