

# Health Bulletin



## Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillators: An Emergency Room In Your Chest Only One Out Of Six Americans Who Are Candidates For An ICD Actually Receive One

(NAPSA)—Each year, approximately 260,000 heart patients become candidates for an implantable cardioverter defibrillator, also known as an ICD. But in patients who have heart conditions similar to that of Vice President Cheney, only one out of six who need an ICD actually get one.

An ICD is designed to monitor the heart's rhythm and prevent sudden cardiac arrest, a leading cause of death in the United States. The Medtronic ICD that Vice President Dick Cheney received was implanted as a precaution. According to Dr. Marshall Stanton, medical director of Medtronic, "225,000 people suffer cardiac arrest in the United States each year. Unfortunately, only 5 percent of those people survive."

During sudden cardiac arrest (SCA), the heart stops beating and does not pump blood. SCA is often caused by an irregular heart rhythm known as tachyarrhythmia—a too-fast heartbeat caused by a disturbance in the electrical activity that regulates each beat. When a heart beats too fast, the problem usually originates in the lower chambers of the heart. This life-threatening condition is often associated with signs and symptoms such as dizziness, sweating, anxiety, fainting, or unexplained irregular heartbeat.

If a patient suffers sudden cardiac arrest, the ICD delivers an electric shock to the heart, restoring its normal rhythm. An ICD is often described as a miniature emergency room in the chest. Unfortunately, many victims who suffer a sudden cardiac arrest are not aware they are at risk. Risk factors include previous heart attacks, heart failure or family history of heart disease. Individuals with a history of heart prob-

**Emergency Room In The Chest**

Not long ago, only massive electrical jolts by an emergency team's defibrillator saved persons whose hearts went into fibrillation—a lethally fast heartbeat.

Today, a simple procedure can implant a cardioverter-defibrillator in the chest that will monitor and prevent sudden cardiac death due to fibrillation.

Source: Medtronic, Inc.

### Learn About The Health Of Your Heart

- Learn about your family's medical history, has anyone had a heart attack, heart disease or sudden cardiac arrest?
- Ask your doctor about heart rhythm disorders
- If you or someone you know is at risk, contact your physician to discuss whether a referral to a heart rhythm specialist makes sense

**Electrical shocks delivered by an automatic external defibrillator used to be the only available treatment for sudden cardiac arrest. Today, tiny defibrillators can be implanted in the body to monitor the speed of the heartbeat. Learning more about your family's medical history may help you find out if you or a family member may benefit from an implantable defibrillator, commonly known as an ICD.**

lems should ask their physician about a referral to a heart rhythm specialist, known as an electrophysiologist, for diagnosis and treatment options.

An ICD is surgically implanted just below the left collarbone, under the skin. Wire leads are threaded through a vein to specific areas of the heart. The procedure takes approximately one hour.

"People don't feel the ICD while it is continuously monitoring the heart rate," Dr. Stanton said. "When the heart goes too fast, the ICD paces the heart—they don't feel that either. They would feel it if the shock was delivered. Most people would describe the shock as a big kick in the chest. Although it is uncomfortable, it only lasts for a split second," he added.

Like Vice President Cheney, many patients resume normal activities immediately after receiving an ICD. James Hicks, a fifth grader from Atlanta, Georgia

received a Medtronic ICD implant in March 1999. At the age of seven, James was playing a soccer match when he suddenly fell down, unconscious. When an electrophysiologist noticed his abnormal heart rhythms, James was diagnosed with Long QT syndrome, an abnormality of the heart's electrical system. James is back to being a regular kid—he's going to school, playing tag football and tennis. His dad, Leon, said, "Since James got his ICD, he's brightened. It's like a big cloud has been removed."

Those at risk for heart failure or sudden cardiac arrest should contact their physician to discuss diagnosis and treatment options. A physician can help you determine whether a referral to an electrophysiologist makes sense. More information about sudden cardiac arrest and implantable cardioverter defibrillators may be found at [www.medtronic.com](http://www.medtronic.com).