Inferior Vena Cava Filter

An inferior vena cava (IVC) filter is a device implanted into the large vein that carries blood from the lower body to the heart and lungs. The filter is designed to trap blood clots before they reach the lungs.

**Why do I need this filter?**
This filter is used in patients who are at risk of blood clots traveling to the lung. It is used when a patient is not able to take blood thinning medicines, when these medicines are not working for a patient, or when it is not safe for a patient to take these medicines.

**How is the filter put in?**
Your doctor will insert the filter through a large vein in either your right or left upper thigh. The filter is in a small plastic tube called a catheter. Once it is in the vein, the filter expands and stays in place against the vena cava wall.

**Does the filter stay in or is it taken out?**
There are two types of filters. There is a type of filter which is left in your body forever to protect you against blood clots. There is also a filter that can be taken out once you no longer need it. You and your doctor will decide which filter is right for you. There is a chance the filter may migrate, clot off, or cause low back pain. It may also be removed for these reasons.

**How is it removed?**
When it is safe to remove it, the filter is taken out. This is done in the operating room. You will be asleep. A catheter is put into the vein on the right side of your neck through a small hole. The filter is grasped and taken out through the catheter. It takes about 30-45 minutes and most people are able to go home the same day.

**How do I schedule to have the filter taken out?**
Call the Physician Assistant for your doctor at 608-265-5763 to see if this surgery is right for you.

Before surgery you will need a CAT (CT) scan of the abdomen and pelvis. This test is to look for blood clots that may be present around the filter and to check its position. If there are no blood clots, you will be set up for a physical exam to be done before it can be removed.

**Incision Care**
Expect the small incision to be pink, swollen, and numb. This is normal.
1. Leave the bandage on for 2 days. Then, remove it and look at your wound daily. Check for signs of infection.
   - Increasing redness or warmth
   - Excess blood or pus-like drainage
   - Increased swelling
   - Temperature by mouth above 100.4°F for 2 readings taken 4 hours apart
2. Wear a Band-Aid® if your incision drains or rubs on your shirt. Change the Band-Aid® at least once each day and if it gets wet. Do not use lotion, powder, or ointment on the wound.
3. Keep the wound dry for 2 days. Do not soak in a hot tub, bathtub, or swim until it is healed. This may be at least 2 weeks.

**Pain Relief**
It is normal to have some pain, swelling, and numbness of the wound and area around it. You may take acetaminophen. Follow the package directions. You may use an ice pack or bag of frozen peas/corn wrapped in a towel on your wound for 20 minutes at a time. Take the ice pack off your wound for 20 minutes before using it again.

**Activity**
1. You will need to have someone drive you home. You will need to have someone stay with you overnight after surgery. You will not be able to drive for 24 hours after surgery. This is because of the medicines used to make you sleep during surgery. Do not make important personal or business decisions until the next day.
2. Your doctor may give you other restrictions before you go home.

**When to Call the Doctor**
- Temperature by mouth over 100.4°F for two readings taken 4 hours apart
- Excess neck swelling
- Increased redness or warmth around wound
- Excess blood or pus-like drainage
- Pain not controlled by over the counter acetaminophen
- Rapid or excess bruising of wound (some bruising is normal)
- Swelling in both legs
- Pain in the abdomen
- Sudden onset of chest pain with shortness of breath, call 911

**Phone Numbers**

**Surgery Clinic, 24 hours a day: 608-263-7502**

**After hours, weekends, or holidays** this connects you to the message center.
Ask for the doctor on call for Dr. ___________.
Leave your name and phone number with the area code. The doctor will call you back.

**Toll Free: 1- 800-323-8942**

Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person’s health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©7/2014. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#6609