

The procedure is performed under sterile conditions. The skin near the point of insertion, usually the neck will be swabbed with antiseptic and you will be covered with sterile drapes. The skin and deeper tissues over the vein will be numbed with local anaesthetic. A fine tube (catheter) will be inserted and guided, using the X-ray equipment into the correct position to remove the filter.

How long will it take?

Every patient is different, and it is not always easy to predict; however, expect to be in the radiology department for about an hour.

What happens afterwards?

You will be taken back to the H&H assessment unit. Nursing staff will carry out routine observations including pulse and blood pressure and will also check the treatment site. You will generally stay on stretcher for approximately 3 hours. **Once you are deemed medically fit you will be able to go home accompanied by a friend or relative.** Take it easy for the rest of the day but you can resume normal activities the next day. Driving, exercise lifting or strenuous activity is not permitted for 24hours following the procedure.

Wound care:

It will be necessary to keep the puncture site covered with a band aid for 3 days after the procedure. If area becomes red, swollen or sore you must return to H&H assessment unit for review.

Contact Details:

H&H Assessment Unit (HHAU),
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Inferior Vena Cava (IVC) Filter Removal

Patient Information Leaflet

What is an IVC filter?

An IVC filter is a small metal device usually placed in a large vein called the inferior vena cava (IVC) that drains blood from the legs and lower part of the abdomen. The IVC filter allows blood to flow through normally but traps any large blood clots, stopping them from getting to your lungs.

Why did I have an IVC filter inserted?

Blood clots (thrombosis) sometimes form in the veins of the legs and pelvis. They are known as a deep vein thrombosis (DVT). The clot can sometimes break free and enter with the blood flow into the lungs. This is called pulmonary embolism (PE) which is a serious condition which can be fatal in a small number of patients. An IVC filter prevents a large PE by trapping a clot before it reaches the lungs.

When should the IVC filter be removed?

It is recommended that the retrievable filter is removed as soon as possible, when your doctor feels that the filter is no longer necessary to prevent PE and it is safe for the filter to be removed. The IVC filter should be removed, if possible, at any time up to six months after it was inserted.

Occasionally the filter is in place longer than six months and removal can be attempted but may not be successful.

How is the filter removed?

The IVC filter is removed via a similar process to the way in which it was placed. The procedure is done in the X-ray department; where a device will be used to remove the filter from your body through a small opening made in the vein of the neck.

Are there any risks?

IVC filter removal is a safe procedure. Serious complications are very rare. There may be a small bruise at the needle site and very rarely there may be damage to the vein. Rarely, the filter cannot be removed and can remain in place long-term.

If you have a permanent filter and you need a magnetic resonance (MRI) scan in the future, you should tell the person doing the scan that you have a filter.

Are you required to make any special preparations?

Removal of an IVC filter is usually carried out as a day case procedure. You will be asked not to eat for four hours nor drink for two hours before the procedure.

If you are on anti-coagulation therapy you will be given instructions on taking your anticoagulant (blood thinner) before the procedure. You will not be able to drive or leave the hospital unattended after this procedure. You will have to arrange to be collected by someone from the HHAU unit, so please make these arrangements in advance of admission.

What happens on the morning of the IVC filter removal?

You will be admitted to the HHAU on the first floor of the research building, by a nurse and doctor. A small cannula (thin tube) will be placed into a vein in your arm and pre procedure bloods will be taken. You will then be taken to the Interventional Radiology Unit on the ground floor.

What happens during removal of the IVC filter?

The interventional radiologist will explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form. You will receive sedation prior to the procedure to ensure you are comfortable. You will lie on the X-ray table, generally flat on your back. You may have monitoring devices attached to your chest and finger and may be given oxygen.

