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UNDERSTAND HEALTH

Can a mobile phone interfere with my pacemaker or ICD?

Some mobile phones can interfere with ICDs and pacemakers. Cardiac Nurse Chloe MacArthur explains why this happens and shares tips for protecting your implantable device.



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How can mobile phone interfere with ICDs and pacemakers?

Mobile phones could potentially interfere with an [ICD](#) or [pacemaker](#), because they often contain magnets, as well as other elements that also produce electromagnetic fields. Electromagnetic fields may interfere with the ability of your ICD or pacemaker to detect the electrical activity of your heart.

Apple devices and your implanted device

Apple's iPhone 12 and iPhone 13 have had some news coverage about the magnets they contain. If you have an implanted device, you can use these phones, but you may need to be more cautious.

Apple's advice is that these products (including the MagSafe accessories) should be kept 15cm (6in) away from an implanted device, or 30cm (12in) away when the phone is charging. Other manufacturers have issued similar guidance about their mobile phones.

Top tips for protecting your implanted device

When you use your phone, always use the ear on the opposite side to your implanted device and don't put the phone in a chest pocket that is on the same side as your pacemaker. If your phone does get close to your device, don't panic. Pacemakers and ICDs are designed to return to their normal settings once the equipment that has interfered with the device has been moved away.

It's always a good idea to check the manufacturer's information that comes with any electronic equipment. Your pacing clinic may be able to offer you more information about equipment that could interfere with your device.

When to speak to your GP

If you experience any new symptoms that you feel may be related to your ICD or pacemaker, such as dizziness or [palpitations](#), talk to your GP or pacing clinic so your device can be checked.

Meet the expert



Chloe MacArthur is a Senior Cardiac Nurse at the British Heart Foundation.

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