



IVC Filters

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Inferior vena cava (IVC) filters: placement and retrieval

IVC filters are metal devices which are designed to be used in the inferior vena cava (IVC), the large main vein that carries deoxygenated blood from the lower half of the body back to the heart.

Pulmonary emboli are blood clots that block in the main artery of a lung. These blood clots usually dislodge from a thigh / leg vein (deep vein thrombosis), travel up the IVC, and get impacted into one of the main arteries of the lung. This might impair normal heart and lung function, and is potentially fatal.

IVC filters can be used to prevent large pulmonary emboli from crossing the IVC. The shape of an IVC filter resembles that of an umbrella, and it functions in a similar way.

How is it done?

The interventional radiologist will puncture one of the main veins (located at the neck or groin), and deploy the IVC filter via a special tube.

Most IVC filters are temporary and thus the interventional radiologist will remove the filter after the necessary period of time has passed. To remove the IVC filter, the interventional radiologist will insert a long plastic tube and a goose-neck system (like a miniature lasso) and use this to remove the IVC filter.



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What are the risks?

Complications are very rare, and include infection and bruising at the puncture site in your neck or groin.

Rarely, the filter might move to another part of your body.

In some cases, pulmonary embolism might still happen despite the placement of an IVC filter.

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References

www.cirse.org