Vascular & Interventional Radiology Queensland

IVC filter

Patient information

What is it?

The inferior vena cava (IVC) is the main vein within the abdomen that carries blood back to the heart from the lower half of the body.
A pulmonary embolus is a blood clot that passes into the lungs from another part of the body, usually the legs.
An IVC filter is device that is placed into the IVC to prevent life-threatening large blood clots passing from the abdomen and legs into the lungs.

Why perform it?

You may be referred for placement of a filter because you have a blood clot in the legs that cannot be treated with the usual medication, you may have repeated pulmonary emboli despite appropriate medical therapy, or you may be high risk for pulmonary embolus during or after a planned operation.

How is it done?

Insertion of an IVC filter is done under local anaesthetic or sedation in an operating room with specialised medical imaging equipment.

The filter can be placed into the IVC from either the vein in the groin crease or at the base of the neck. Your interventional radiologist will use an ultrasound to guide a small tube into the vein, through which x-ray dye (contrast) is injected to outline the anatomy of the IVC. A delivery device is then passed into the IVC over a wire and opened up under x-ray guidance. X-ray dye is then again used to confirm good positioning of the device.

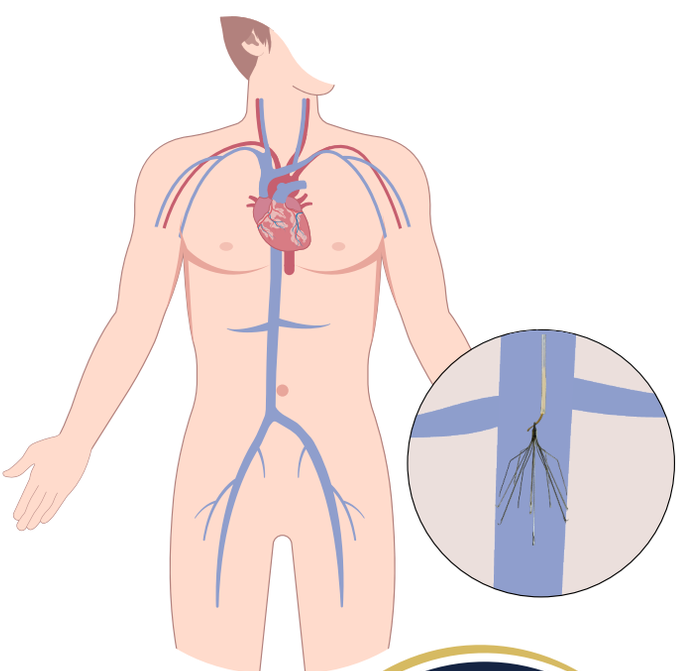
When it comes time to remove the device, a retrieval device is passed into the vein from the neck to the level of the filter. A small lasso is used to snare the device and enclose it into a catheter, which is then removed.

What are the risks?

It is important to discuss the risks and complications of this procedure with your interventional radiologist in full, but some of the risk associated with this procedure include:
- bleeding from access site
- infection
- displacement of the filter
- clotting of the IVC
- damage to IVC on retrieval

Follow up

It is important to remove the IVC filter when no longer required. Usually within a few months you will be contacted by our staff to arrange for the filter to be removed.



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