

Many people with implantable defibrillators can participate in vigorous sports

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Many people with implantable defibrillators can safely participate in vigorous sports according to new research in the American Heart Association journal *Circulation*.

An [implantable cardioverter defibrillator](#) (ICD) in the chest is somewhat similar to a pacemaker, delivering one or more electrical shocks to restore a normal heartbeat when it detects a dangerous rhythm.

Some science recommendations advise people with ICDs not to participate in competitive sports more vigorous than golf or bowling.

"But these recommendations were based on the best judgment of physicians, not actual data looking at the safety of more rigorous sports," said Rachel Lampert, M.D., lead author of the study and associate professor of medicine at the Yale School of Medicine in New Haven, Conn.

Researchers followed 372 ICD recipients, ages 10-60, for an average of two-and-a-half years each. They included competitive athletes, high school and college athletes and others who participated in vigorous sports such as running, basketball, soccer, tennis, volleyball, skiing and snowboarding.

In this prospective multinational registry, researchers found that although some athletes received shocks during sports for life-threatening and non-life-threatening heart rhythms, there were no injuries or deaths

related to the shocks or the underlying abnormal rhythms.

Seventy-seven people received 121 shocks during the study. Of the total study population:

- 10 percent received shocks while participating in competition or practice.
- 8 percent received shocks during other physical activities.
- 6 percent received shocks while resting.

The rate of shocks among those studied was similar to those reported in previous studies for less active people with implantable defibrillators, Lampert said.

These data suggest that athletes should decide, with their physicians, whether to return to vigorous sports after discussing their specific situation and preferences, Lampert said.

Provided by American Heart Association

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