



LITTLE COMPANY OF MARY
HOSPITAL AND HEALTH CARE CENTERS

The Technology to Heal, the Mission to Care

Inferior Vena Cava Filter Placement and Removal

In an inferior vena cava filter placement procedure, interventional radiologists use image guidance to place a filter in the inferior vena cava (IVC), the large vein in the abdomen that returns blood from the lower body to the heart.

Blood clots that develop in the veins of the leg or pelvis, a condition called deep vein thrombosis (DVT), occasionally break up and large pieces of the clot can travel to the lungs. An IVC filter is a small metal device that traps large clot fragments and prevents them from traveling through the vena cava vein to the heart and lungs, where they could cause severe complications such as pain, difficulty breathing, shortness of breath or even death.

Until recently, IVC filters were available only as permanently implanted devices. Newer filters, called optionally retrievable filters, may be left in place permanently or have the option to potentially be removed from the blood vessel later. This removal may be performed when the risk of clot travelling to the lung has passed. Removal of an IVC filter eliminates any long term risks of having the filter in place such as filter fracture or recurrent DVT. It does not address the cause of the deep vein thrombosis or coagulation. Your referring physician will determine if blood thinners are still necessary. However, not all retrievable IVC filters are able to be retrieved if the risk of clots traveling to the lung persists. These filters can be left in place as permanent filters.