

January 2017

## Information about risk of complications related to Inferior Vena Cava (IVC) Filters

Health Canada has issued an alert warning of potential serious complications associated with long-term placement of IVC filters. [View the Health Canada alert.](#)

### Why are IVC filters used?

IVC filters are used to prevent blood clots that may form in the lower part of the body from traveling to the lungs.

IVC filters can be used temporarily or permanently.

### What type of risks are associated with IVC filters?

According to the Health Canada alert, serious complications have been reported in patients with an IVC filter, including caval perforation, caval thrombosis, filter fracture and fragment embolization, intracardiac migration, cardiac perforation, cardiac tamponade, and death. Many of these complications occurred with long-term (greater than 30 days) filter implantation. In the majority of cases, the patients did not have any symptoms.

### What is happening at HHS?

All patients who have had a filter inserted at HHS in the last 12 months at Hamilton Health Sciences have already been contacted as these individuals are the most likely to be a candidate for the device to be removed.

Hamilton Health Sciences has also conducted a review of all patients who have had a filter placed from 2003 to 2016 and who may not have had the filter removed. All of these patients are being notified by registered mail with instructions to contact their family physician for a discussion about the status of the filter.

It is important to know that removal of an IVC filter after one year is rarely indicated or technically feasible. Patients of advanced age, with major comorbidities or underlying malignancy are extremely unlikely to be a candidate for removal. Nevertheless, Health Canada is requiring all hospitals to notify patients of the situation.

### I have been told that I will need an IVC filter as part of my treatment. Should I be concerned?

Health Canada recommends that IVC filters should continue to be used for patients who cannot take anticoagulants (clot fighting drugs) AND who have deep vein thrombosis (DVT) of the leg, or acute pulmonary embolism (PE) (clot in the lung).

Any patient who might require an IVC filter will have a thrombosis specialist involved in their care to be sure that a filter is their best option and to be sure that appropriate follow up is available.

### Who can I speak with if I have further questions?

If you wish to speak with someone at Hamilton Health Sciences, you may also call the Patient Experience Office at 905-521-2100 ext. 75740. You will be asked to leave your name, date of birth and phone number and a nurse will return your call within two business days.