Inferior Vena Cava Filter Removal

Why should your inferior vena cava filter be removed?
An inferior vena cava (IVC) filter is made of thin metal wires that form a mesh umbrella designed to catch blood clots and prevent them from traveling to the heart or lungs. Most people will not require this type of mechanical protection for life. There are known and unknown risks of having an IVC filter, and therefore most physicians and the FDA recommend removing the filter when it is no longer needed to prevent these risks. Once you return to your usual level of activity, are taking blood thinners, or your risk for blood clots has returned to normal, the FDA advises that filters be removed as soon as they are no longer needed. However, removal is not recommended for all patients. Our interventional radiology physicians will work with you and your other doctors to determine when and if you should have your filter removed.

How is an inferior vena cava filter removed?
You will arrive early for your procedure so that a nurse can check you in and you can speak with a doctor to make sure all of your questions are answered. Once you are ready, the nurse will start an IV so that he/she can give medications to make sure you are comfortable and pain free while the doctor works. The doctor then numbs the vein most commonly in the neck with local anesthetic. The doctor then uses real-time x-ray and ultrasound to guide a thin tube (catheter) into the vein. X-ray dye (contrast) is then injected to make the blood vessels visible on x-ray to assure that the filter is free of clots and that it is safe to remove. The filter is then removed through a small catheter. Once the procedure is complete, you may be required to stay in bed for a short time. This helps prevent bleeding from the site where the doctor has worked. Most patients go home the same day.

Pre-Procedure Checklist
- You will need to pre-register before your appointment by calling 540-224-5200.
- Check in 1 hour and 30 minutes prior to your appointment time in the main lobby of Roanoke Memorial Hospital.
- You may not eat or drink after midnight the night before your procedure.
- You may take important medications (blood pressure, heart, etc) with a small sip of water.
- Please dress comfortably and leave your valuables at home.
• You need a responsible adult to drive you home and your doctor may want them to stay overnight with you.
• Bring a list of your medications with you for the nurse to review.
• If you are taking medications that thin your blood, you will need to consult the department for specific recommendations. You may call us at 540-981-7083 to speak with a nurse. Most people do not need to stop their blood thinners.

Immediately following your procedure
• No driving, operating heavy machinery, or making any important decisions for 24 hours.
• Light activity only for 24 hours after your procedure. Do not lift anything over 10 pounds.
• You may gradually resume your normal activity over the next few days.
• Have a responsible adult stay with you overnight.
• Start with light food. If you have no problems, you may progress to a regular diet.
• Drink plenty of liquids for the next 2 days to help your body clear the IV contrast that was used for your procedure.
• You may remove the bandage after 48 hours and shower normally at that time.
• No creams, lotions or ointments should be applied to the site.
• Avoid alcoholic beverages and smoking or being around those who are smoking today.

What to report to your doctor
• If you become weak, faint, or dizzy
• If you develop severe pain
• Fevers greater than 101° F or chills
• If you have numbness or a change in color in your arm or leg
• Bleeding or swelling at the site
  ❖ If you experience bleeding, immediately hold firm pressure over the site and have someone call 911.

For additional information, please visit:
http://www.sirweb.org/patients/deep-vein-thrombosis/