

Cardiac Catheterization

What is a Cardiac Catheterization?

Cardiac Catheterization is the insertion of a catheter (long, narrow, flexible tube) into an artery, usually in your groin. The catheter is used to inject x-ray dye (called contrast media) into the coronary arteries as the doctor uses x-ray to find any problems. This allows your cardiologist to make a diagnosis regarding the severity of your coronary artery disease, as well as decide on a plan of treatment.

Cardiac Catheterization is also used to look at the heart valves and how the heart moves, to look at coronary artery bypass grafts, to look for high pressure in your pulmonary artery, to decide which medicine to use.

X-ray exposure from the study is quite minimal and causes no risk to your health.

Preparation

You should not eat or drink anything after midnight. You may drink water with your medications as directed by your doctor.

A family member or responsible adult should come to the hospital with you when you have your procedure.

Please bring a current list of your medications and allergies.

If you have a living will, please bring a copy.

If you take insulin, please bring your insulin with you.

An IV will be started. Lab work will be drawn. An EKG will be performed.

Shaving of the insertion site (usually the right groin) will be done.

You may be given medicine to help you relax before the procedure.

What Happens During the Test?

You will be attached to equipment for heart, blood pressure, and oxygen monitoring.

You may receive IV medication for sedation once in the catheterization lab.

The testing takes place in a cool, darkened room. You will lie on a special table where x-rays can be taken, either by moving the table or by moving the x-ray machine (located directly above your head and chest).

Medicine will be put into your groin first to make it feel numb. This procedure may be painful.

You will not feel the catheters as they are moved through your blood vessels. You may feel warm, sick to your stomach, or have chest pain as the contrast dye is injected through the catheters. Please notify your nurse immediately if you feel different in any way.

You will be sleepy during the procedure, but awake enough to follow directions. You may be asked to cough, take a deep breath, or hold your breath at certain times.

The catheters will be removed from the groin once the doctor is finished with the procedure. Your doctor may use a closure device to seal the blood vessel at the insertion site. Pressure will be held to the insertion site by hand to control bleeding (usually for 5-15 minutes) and then a bandage will be placed over the site.

After the Procedure

You will be taken to your same room after the procedure.

If the insertion site was your groin, you will have to lie flat in bed with your leg straight for 2-6 hours.

Your nurse will check on you to monitor your vitals, groin site and pulses in your feet.

Please tell your nurse if you have any pain or feel a warm, sticky feeling at your groin site.

Your heart doctor will talk to you and your family about your test results.

Once you're allowed to eat, drink plenty of fluids to help flush the contrast dye out of your system.

You will need a family member or friend to drive you home after your heart doctor releases you to go home.

Special Note

It is important that you understand your cardiac catheterization procedure. We encourage you to ask any questions and tell any concerns to the doctor, nurse, or other heart service personnel.

Coronary Balloons and Stents

What are Coronary Balloons and Stents?

Coronary balloons push cholesterol buildup to the wall of the blood vessel when it is blocking the blood flow in the blood vessel. Balloons may be used several times throughout the procedure. They are removed after they are used.

Coronary stents are tiny mesh-like stainless steel tubes (look like a spring out of a ball point ink pen) that are placed in narrowed blood vessels to improve blood flow to your heart. The stent stays in place permanently, holding the blood vessel open and improving blood flow to your heart.

During the Procedure

Coronary balloons and stents can be used during your cardiac catheterization if they are needed. Your heart doctor will decide how many balloons and stents to use in the blood vessels of your heart.

When balloons and stents are being used, blood flow to the heart is temporarily blocked. This may cause you to have chest pain. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you feel different or have pain during the procedure.

Placing balloons and stents may take from one to four hours.

After the Procedure

You will be taken to your same room after the procedure.

The tube in your groin will be removed once your blood has thickened and your heart doctor is satisfied with your progress. This may take several hours. While the tube is in your groin you will need to keep your leg and hip straight. Once the tube is removed, you will have to lie flat in bed with your leg straight for 4-6 hours.

Your nurse will check on you to monitor your vitals, groin site and pulses in your feet.

Your nurse will help you eat and change your position in bed.

Your activity will be gradually increased 4-6 hours after the tube is taken out.

You will be transferred to a room on the third floor (3 Center/3 West) where you will stay the night. You will go home the next day if your heart doctor is happy with your progress.

You will need a family member or friend to drive you home after you are released by the doctor to go home.