

Cardiac Catheterization

Your doctor has arranged for you to have a cardiac catheterization (cardiac cath). This procedure will be done during a hospital stay of several days or during a one day visit to the hospital.

Cardiac catheterization is the diagnostic procedure that gives the clearest look at the arteries that supply the heart muscle. The procedure also provides information about how the heart muscle and valves perform as a pump.

The cardiac catheterization involves the insertion of a small, soft plastic tube, called a catheter, into an artery or vein. The catheter is advanced into the heart, where pressure measurements are obtained. A special dye is injected through the catheter into the chambers and arteries of the heart. Moving pictures are made of the way the heart and primary arteries function.

The place where the catheter is inserted is usually in the groin area (where the leg joins the

trunk of the body) of the right leg. However, the right arm or left groin may be used. The area is cleansed and surrounded with sterile coverings. As would be expected, this may cause some minor discomfort.

After the area is numbed, the catheter is inserted into the blood vessel and advanced into the heart. Once in place, pressures within each of the chambers of the heart are measured. A dye or contrast agent is injected to evaluate the performance of the heart, and to detect the presence of any narrowing or obstruction in the coronary arteries. A warm, flushed sensation is usually felt when the dye is injected, but this passes quickly (usually within one or two minutes). Sophisticated X-ray equipment shows how the dye travels through the heart and coronary arteries. These images, along with pressure measurements, are recorded. They provide precise, detailed information about the heart's function.



For inpatients, adjustments to scheduled medicines and diet may be necessary to prepare for the procedure. Data is gathered from the current medical history and physical exam along with other test results. For outpatients, our office will provide information needed to prepare for the cardiac

catheterization. Instructions will be given for proper medication and diet. Arrangements for transportation home should be made, because driving is discouraged during the first 24 hours after the procedure.

Below, you will find answers to the most frequently asked questions about this procedure. If you have any further questions, please feel free to ask.

Frequently Asked Questions

How long does the procedure take and how long will I be at the location of the Catheterization?

The procedure takes 45-90 minutes with an additional recovery time of 2 to 4 hours.

What is a cardiac catheterization and who performs this procedure?

Cardiac catheterization, also known as coronary angiogram or angiography, is a special test used to look at the arteries and chambers of the heart. It helps your doctor in diagnosing coronary artery disease, defective heart valves, congenital heart defects, diseases of the heart muscle and location and severity of blockages in your coronary arteries. This procedure, although performed by a specially trained cardiologist, is not considered surgery. The patient is awake and fully conscious.

Is having a cardiac catheterization in an office safe?

In any setting, hospital or non-hospital, the patient is of supreme importance and supersedes all other considerations. Emergency equipment is readily available. We continuously monitor the activity of your heart during cardiac catheterization, making it a safe procedure. The American College of Cardiology, in conjunction with the AMA, has outlined guidelines for appropriate selection of patients for outpatient angiography. These guidelines are followed by ALL of our physicians.

Who is responsible for getting authorization if it is required by my insurance?

If your insurance requires pre-certification, our staff will obtain it.

When will I know the results and the physician recommendations?

Your physician will discuss your results with you and a member of your family or a friend following the procedure.

Your primary care physician will also receive the results.

Should I take my medications the morning of the procedure?

Most medications are to be taken the morning of your procedure. Specific instructions will be given to you at the time your procedure is scheduled. There are special instructions for patients who are diabetic or are taking blood thinners or aspirin.

When am I able to return to my normal activities?

Patients usually can return to normal activities in 1 to 2 days.

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