

Heart Catheterization

What is a heart catheterization?

A heart catheterization (also known as coronary angiogram) lets your doctor see how well your heart pumps blood. Your doctor will be able to look at your heart muscle, valves and coronary arteries.

This test is done with a catheter (a small, thin tube) which your doctor inserts through an artery or vein in your arm or leg. A special X-ray monitor allows the cardiologist (heart doctor) to watch the dye flowing through the heart vessels to see if there are areas of narrowing.

Before the Procedure

- For a **morning** test, you may not eat solid foods for six hours before or drink anything for four hours before the procedure.
- For an **afternoon** test, you may have clear liquids for breakfast. Follow your cardiologist's directions for taking your regular medicine.
- If you have diabetes, remind your cardiologist of your diet, medicine or insulin needs.
- **If you have an allergy to the X-ray dye, tell your cardiologist or nurse.**
- At the hospital, you will sign a consent form and wear a hospital gown.
- Your arm, groin area or both will be cleaned and shaved,
- A nurse will start an intravenous (IV) line for medicine during the test.
- You may receive medicine to relax you.

During the Procedure

- Your arm, groin area or both will be cleaned again. Your blood pressure will be taken. You will be hooked up to a heart monitor. This monitor lets the cardiac technologist watch your heart rate and blood pressure during the procedure.
- Your cardiologist will inject a local anesthetic (to numb the area) where the catheter will be placed. This may sting.
- You may feel slight pressure as the catheter goes in.
- Once the catheter is in place, your cardiologist will take pictures of your heart. You may be asked to hold your breath or to cough. You may feel a brief hot flash (up to 30 seconds) when dye is injected into your left ventricle

- If the cardiologist suspects a heart valve problem, he or she will examine the right side of your heart.
- The cardiologist will take out the catheter. He or she will apply pressure in the site until the bleeding stops.
- The procedure may take an hour or longer.

After the Procedure

- Nurses will check your pulse, blood pressure and insertion site.
- You will stay flat in bed for as long as ordered by your cardiologist.
- You will be able to eat and drink as soon as you like. You may want to drink extra fluids to get the dye out of your body. You will not see any change in the color of your urine.
- The results will be discussed with your regular doctor.

When to Call Your Nurse

Before you leave the hospital, call your nurse if you:

- see bleeding at the catheter insertion site
- feel tingling or notice numbness below the catheter insertion site
- have pain at the catheter insertion site