

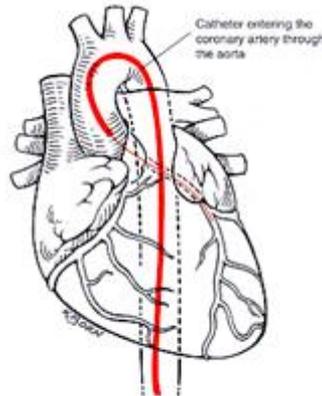
# Cardiac Catheterization

## What Other Terms Are Used To Describe Cardiac Catheterization?

- Heart Cath
- Angiogram

## What Is Cardiac Catheterization?

- This procedure is nonsurgical and is performed under X-ray guidance in the Cardiac Catheterization Lab.
- A catheter (a long, thin, flexible tube) is inserted through an artery (blood vessel) in the thigh up into the heart. Occasionally an artery in the arm is used.
- X-rays (pictures) are taken of the heart and coronary arteries.
- The patient is given a mild sedative to help him relax but remains awake during the procedure to allow him to answer questions regarding his comfort level, any chest pain or shortness of breath.
- A small area of the groin or arm is shaved and cleansed where the catheter will be inserted.
- Medication will be used to anesthetize (numb) this area so a small incision can be made where the catheter will be inserted.
- The catheter is inserted through the femoral artery in the groin (or an artery in the arm at the crease of the elbow). X-ray is used to guide the catheter up into the heart.
- A colourless dye is injected through the catheter, and X-ray pictures are taken of the heart and coronary arteries.
- The patient can watch the procedure on the monitor if he wants to.
- The test takes about an hour.



An angiogram is a kind of x-ray test that can show if you have clogged arteries that can lead to heart attack.

## Why Is A Cardiac Catheterization Done?

- This test will help the doctor to evaluate the patient's cardiac condition related to:
  - How well the heart muscle and valves are working
  - The extent of damage to the heart after a heart attack
  - Which coronary arteries are narrowed
  - The extent and degree of the narrowing
  - What treatment is required: medical management, an angioplasty (PTCA) or surgery

## What Symptoms May Be Experienced During The Procedure?

- Slight burning or stinging from the medicine used to numb the catheter insertion site.
- Slight discomfort or pressure as the catheter is being inserted.
- Slight nausea, extra heartbeats, and/or a warm flushing throughout the body (10-20 seconds) as the dye is being injected.

## What Happens After The Procedure Is Completed?

- After X-rays are taken, the catheter is removed.
- A bandaid or pressure dressing will be placed over the area where the catheter was inserted.
- Firm pressure is applied for 15-30 minutes until the bleeding stops.
- If an artery in the arm is used, pressure will be applied.
- The patient will be observed for 6-8 hours before discharged home.
- The insertion site will be checked frequently for signs of bleeding.
- Blood pressure and the pulse in the leg (or arm) used will be checked frequently.
- A knot under the skin where the catheter was inserted may occur. This is only temporary.
- Bruising to the leg/groin area where the catheter was inserted may occur. The bruising may spread down the leg and is only temporary.
- Most patients are discharged in 8 hours with minimal activity restrictions.

#### **What Precautions Should be Observed Following The Procedure?**

- Avoid bending the leg at the hip (groin area) for 6 to 8 hours.
- Hold the bandaid firmly, if need to cough or sneeze.
- Avoid bending or using the arm for several hours, if it was used for the insertion of the catheter.

#### **What Signs And Symptoms Should Be Reported Immediately?**

- Discomfort or sudden pain at the insertion site.
- A warm, moist and sticky feeling, or bleeding.
- Any discomfort in chest, neck, jaw, arms or upper back, shortness of breath, weakness or dizziness.

#### **What Preparation is Needed?**

- Nothing to eat or drink after midnight.
- It is important for the patient to ask his doctor:
  - How to adjust insulin and food intake prior to the test if he is a diabetic
  - If he should take his regular medications the morning of the test
  - If taking blood thinners (i.e. Coumadin), should they be withheld and, if so, how long prior to the procedure
- Leave all valuables at home.
- Make arrangements to be driven home.