

CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION

What is Cardiac Catheterization?

A Cardiac Catheterization is a diagnostic procedure which does a comprehensive examination of how the heart and its blood vessels function. During cardiac catheterization, the doctor will insert a long, thin, flexible tube, called a catheter, into your body. The catheter is inserted into a blood vessel called the femoral artery in your groin area and it is guided toward the heart. The procedure allows the doctor to study how well your heart pumps blood and to examine the coronary arteries (the vessels that supply blood to the heart muscle) and the heart valves.

Other terms used to describe the cardiac catheterization include: *coronary angiography, angiogram, cardiac cath, and heart cath.*

Preparing for your Catheterization:

Unless you are already in the hospital, you will most likely be asked to arrive in the morning on the day of your catheterization. You will be asked not to eat or drink anything after midnight the day before your catheterization. Check with your doctor several days before the procedure. You may be asked to stop certain medications (such as aspirin or anticoagulants) a few days before your procedure. Upon arrival you will go to Admitting in the hospital. There you will register and you may be required to have several routine tests, such as an ECG, and blood tests.

After you have completed these tests you will be directed to the Cardiac Cath Lab on the X level of the POB (professional office building). Upon arrival you will be greeted by the cath lab personnel and asked to change into a hospital gown. The cath lab nurse will ask you questions about your medical history. The nurse will start an intravenous (IV) line in your arm. This line allows drugs to be injected directly into your vein, if they are needed. If you wear dentures, hearing aids, or glasses, you will most likely be allowed to keep them on.

During Your Cardiac Catheterization:

You will be taken to the procedure room in a wheel chair or a movable bed. Then you will be helped onto the cath table. The table has a large x-ray camera above it and television screens close by.

Once you are positioned on the cath table, you will be connected to several monitors and covered with sterile sheets. The cath lab personnel will be wearing sterile gowns, gloves and masks. The technologist will shave both groins and apply a cleansing agent to help prevent infection. The doctor will then have the nurse to give you medication that will relax you and make you drowsy. The doctor will then inject a local anesthetic into the skin in the groin to numb the area. This may cause a stinging sensation.

The doctor will use a catheter to inject x ray dye into the arteries in your heart. The x-ray camera then takes pictures of this process so that the doctor can review them after the test is completed. You may feel a warm sensation during these injections, but it is generally not painful. The test is usually completed in 15-20 minutes on average.

After your Catheterization is Completed:

After the test is completed the doctor and technologist will remove the sheath and the artery will be closed with a vascular closure device. This is a device that will immediately seal the artery. The doctor will show you all the pictures from your test and answer any question you have concerning them. After speaking with the doctor you will return to the holding area where you will be allowed to have something to eat and drink. Your family will also be able to come in at that time and visit with you. After one hour has passed you will be allowed to get up and get dressed. A family member or friend will then be asked to drive you home. You will not be able to drive for 24 hours after the procedure.

Your nurse will give you the discharge instructions and then you will be taken by wheelchair to the pick up area of the hospital. There your family member or friend will take you home to rest for the remainder of the day.