

## Why a cardiac catheterization?

Your physician has recommended you have a cardiac catheterization because of your symptoms. Whether you have chest discomfort, shortness of breath, an abnormal EKG, an abnormal stress test or other suspicious symptoms, a cardiac catheterization is a common procedure used to help diagnose heart problems.

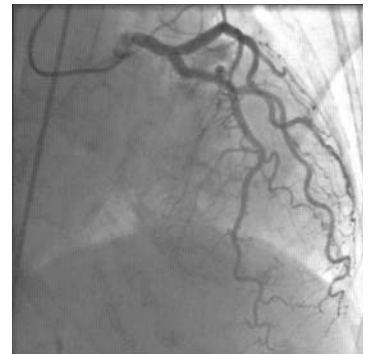
The physicians and staff at the Cotton-O'Neil Heart Center perform more than 2,000 of these procedures each year. The state-of-the-art cardiac catheterization laboratory at Stormont-Vail provides the finest images of coronary arteries available.

## What is a cardiac catheterization?

A cardiac catheterization is an X-ray test to help your cardiologist determine:

- ♥ how well your heart is pumping
- ♥ whether you have blockages in your coronary arteries, and if so, their severity
- ♥ if your heart valves are working properly

During a cardiac catheterization, a long, thin, soft tube (called a catheter) is inserted into a blood vessel where your leg meets your torso. The tube is then guided toward your heart and a special dye, called contrast, is injected through the tube. The contrast helps to visualize various parts of your heart. While the contrast is injected, a moving picture is taken and stored on a computer. This contrast injection and picture taking process is repeated several times to capture all the information required. With this information, your cardiologist can recommend the best possible treatment for you.



## What to expect during your cardiac catheterization?

The procedure usually takes less than one hour. During that time, you are awake but will be given medication to help relax. When you are brought into the cath lab, you will be greeted and asked to move onto the procedure table. After being asked a few questions, your leg and groin area will be shaved and scrubbed with a cleansing solution. Be sure to let the staff know if you are allergic to iodine. You will be covered from chin to toes with a surgical drape.



Your cardiologist will numb the area where the tube will be placed. You will feel a pinprick and a burning sensation as the numbing medicine is injected. This is similar to when the dentist numbs your mouth. You will feel some pressure as the tubes are placed, but this should be painless.

The actual procedure begins as the catheters are guided toward the heart. Contrast is injected and pictures are taken. You may be asked to hold your breath and may feel a hot flash lasting for about 10 seconds. You may also be asked to cough from time to time to help move the contrast through your heart.

When the pictures are completed, the catheter is removed and the puncture site in your artery is held under pressure for at least 15 minutes to prevent bleeding. Sometimes a stitch is used to seal the artery.

After your catheterization, you will be taken to a recovery area or to your room. You will need to lie flat with your leg still for approximately four to six hours. Most people have no pain after catheterization. In fact, many people go home the same day. The cardiologist, or nurse, will visit with you about the results of the procedure before you go home.



## What happens when I go home?

For two to three days you should avoid lifting, and only perform light activities. You may resume driving the day following discharge. Most people return to normal activities within a few days after going home.

You may find a small bruise or lump under your skin where the cardiologist numbed your artery – this is normal. Although the area may be tender for a few days, it should go away within a few weeks.

## When do I call my doctor's office?

You are advised to contact your doctor's office if you experience:

- ♥ Chest pain
- ♥ Increased pain, swelling or bleeding near or at the puncture site
- ♥ Numbness or coldness in the leg that held the catheter
- ♥ Fever above 100 degrees

## What do these words mean?

- ♥ **Angina:** symptoms that occur when the heart muscle can't get enough blood. Angina often appears as pressure, tightness or pain in the chest, arm, neck or jaw.
- ♥ **Angiogram:** a special X-ray of a blood vessel
- ♥ **Contrast/Dye:** a special fluid that allows X-rays of blood vessels to be taken.
- ♥ **Coronary arteries:** blood vessels that wrap around the heart and supply the heart muscle with blood.
- ♥ **IV (intravenous) line:** a thin tube that delivers fluid into a vein.
- ♥ **Plaque:** a deposit of fatty materials within artery walls.
- ♥ **Sheath:** a short tube used to pass a catheter into a blood vessel.
- ♥ **Valves:** "doorways" that open and close to let blood move between the heart's chambers.

## How do I prepare for cardiac catheterization?

Generally, your procedure begins two hours after arrival time. Due to unforeseen circumstances your procedure time may vary.

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Location \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival Time \_\_\_\_\_

- ♥ **Do not** eat after midnight the night before the test. You may drink clear liquids.
- ♥ Bring a complete list of your current medications with you.
- ♥ Bring an overnight bag. You may be staying overnight.
- ♥ Take the following medications the morning of your test before coming to the hospital:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

- ♥ If you are diabetic: \_\_\_\_\_
- ♥ Notify your doctor if you are allergic to iodine or shellfish.
- ♥ Special comments: \_\_\_\_\_

♥ Questions I want to ask: \_\_\_\_\_

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