

Do you want to know?

Cardiac Catheterization

A03
sheet 1/2

What is it?

Cardiac Catheterization is a test done by a cardiologist in the cardiac laboratory. This test looks at the pumping action of the heart with a special wire that carefully measures the blood pressures inside the heart. It visualizes the heart by injecting a special dye and looking at exactly where the blockages are. It helps evaluate the presence and location of blockages in the heart blood vessels.

What do you need to know?

Pre-intra—Post procedure

- Refrain from eating or drinking after midnight (the night before the test). Occasionally, if the test is scheduled for the afternoon, you are allowed to have a light breakfast and then asked not to eat or drink anything.
 - Expect the area of catheter insertion to be shaved and cleaned to decrease chances of microbial infection.
 - Make sure to inform your physician if you are allergic to shellfish or have ever had a reaction to any x-ray dye.
 - Expect an infusion to be started and a sedative to be given before the test to relax you.
 - The procedure is done in a cardiac laboratory where the staff will be wearing operating room clothing. The test takes about an hour.
 - During the test, inform the staff if you feel any discomfort from the hard table or the cold environment. Some patients find this hard table the most uncomfortable part of the test.
 - A special type of x-ray screen called a fluoroscope shows the blood vessels and the heart so that the physician can guide the catheter into the correct position. The physician will insert a catheter into a large blood vessel in the groin area of one leg or in one arm, then thread tiny wires up to the heart.
- Dye is injected into the heart to study its pumping action and visualize the arteries.
- Inform the physician and staff immediately if chest pain or pressure at various points during the test occurs.
 - Follow the instructions of the physician during the procedure such as “to cough” or “hold a breath”.
 - At the end of the procedure, the catheter will be removed and a hard pressure will be applied on the incision site for around twenty minutes.
 - Stay FLAT in bed for 6 hours depending on your condition and the physician’s judgment. Many patients find this prolonged bed rest to be the most tedious and difficult part of the day.
 - Tell the nurse if you feel pain or discomfort. Sedatives and painkillers will be available. Expect the nurse to check your lower extremity pulses every fifteen minutes for the first hour, then every thirty minutes for a period of four hours.
 - Eat and drink after the test. Fluids are often encouraged to wash the dye out of your system. You will be provided with a urinal or a bedpan while you are in bed.
 - Apply some pressure with your fingers over the incision site in case of sneezing or coughing.
 - Inform the nurse immediately if you feel any:
 - Chest pain or pressure
 - Bleeding from the leg
 - Numbness, coldness or tingling in the leg

Follow-up Care



- Post catheterization, most people can resume a normal routine the following day, however, this depends on your physical condition. Your physician will discuss with you how much physical activity is safe.
- Call your physician immediately if the incision site bleeds or shows signs of infection such as; swelling, pain, fever, or drainage.

The content of this educational leaflet is of general information. Ask your physician or health care provider if this content applies to you.

Prepared by the Nursing Services in coordination with other health care disciplines.

