

CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION

Cardiac catheterization (also called a coronary angiogram) is a test using x-rays and x-ray dye to see the heart and coronary arteries. The coronary arteries carry blood to the heart muscle to supply it with oxygen and nutrients. When they are narrowed or blocked, this can be seen with catheterization. That information is then used to decide if a stent (a tube used to open a narrowed area) or bypass surgery is necessary. Cardiac catheterization usually takes 30-60 minutes to perform. If a blockage is seen which needs to be treated right away, an angioplasty (balloon dilation of the area) may be performed and a stent may be placed.

Procedure:

- Normally, angiograms are done in the hospital.
- You will be instructed not to eat or drink for 6-8 hours before the test.
- You will be given a mild sedative to help you relax and an IV will be started in order to give you other medication if needed.
- After an injection of local anesthetic (a numbing medication), a thin plastic tube called a catheter is inserted into an artery in the arm or the groin.
- Once in position, dye is injected so that the physician may take a series of X-rays to see the actual beating of the heart and functioning of the heart valves.
- The dye may cause a feeling like a 'hot flash' or some burning or nausea briefly.
- A bandage is applied to the groin to prevent bleeding.
- You will rest and be observed for several hours after the procedure.

Risks:

- There is a small risk of developing a stroke during the procedure caused by a blood clot or piece of plaque (blockage) that may be broken off by the catheter. This is a very uncommon complication.
- Other small risks include puncturing a blood vessel with the catheter, and developing infection, pain, or swelling at the site of catheter insertion.
- In elderly persons or in those with kidney disease, the contrast material may lead to temporary or permanent kidney failure.
- Allergic reactions to the contrast material can occur, but are usually easily managed.

Following the procedure:

- It is common to experience fatigue or soreness from lying in awkward positions during the procedure.
- It is recommended that you drink plenty of fluids after the angiogram to flush the kidneys.

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