

*If you have
any questions
or concerns,
please call the
Cath Lab at
312.926.CATH
(2284).*

Cardiac Catheterization

A cardiac catheterization (cath) is an X-ray examination of the heart and its arteries. It looks at how well the heart works. The test helps find artery blockage or narrowing and determine if you need further treatment.

During the procedure, a thin catheter (tube) is inserted into an artery and slowly passed into your heart. Dye (contrast) is injected and X-rays are taken. The contrast allows the blood vessels to be seen. You will feel little or no pain, and the test lasts 1 to 2 hours.

This brochure will explain what to expect before, during and after a cardiac cath.

Before the procedure

The Cardiac Catheterization Lab (Cath Lab) nurse will contact you about 1 week before the procedure. The nurse will answer your questions, review the pre-cath guidelines and review your current medications with you. Please tell the nurse about:

- Allergies
- Unusual reactions to iodine or X-ray contrast in the past
- Blood thinner medication
- Diabetes medication
- NSAIDs (nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory pain medicine such as ibuprofen)

Night before the procedure

The night before the procedure, do not eat or drink anything after midnight.

Day of the procedure

The day of your procedure, take only the medicine the nurse has instructed you to take. Medicine should be taken with small sips of water. On the morning of your procedure, do not take any *oral* diabetes medication.

Arrival

Please check in on the 8th floor of Galter Pavilion at 675 North Saint Clair Street. Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from the Feinberg and Galter pavilions. Check in at the Reception Desk on the 8th floor. For a discounted rate, please bring your parking ticket with you. Tickets can be validated at the Customer Services Desk on the 1st, 2nd and 8th floors of the Feinberg and Galter pavilions.

For their own safety, children under the age of 16 may not be in the testing area. They may stay in the waiting room with a responsible adult.

What to expect

You will be assigned a room for your pre- and post-procedure care. After you change into a hospital gown, the nurse will review your health history and take your blood pressure, pulse and temperature. You also will have blood tests. An IV (into the vein) line will be inserted into your arm or hand. The IV will be used for fluids and medicines needed during the procedure. Your groin and wrist area will be cleaned and shaved.

The physician will discuss the procedure with you. After the physician has answered your questions, you will be asked to give your written consent for the test.

You may wear your glasses, dentures (or bridgework) and hairpieces. You will be asked to empty your bladder just before going into the procedure room.

During the procedure

Once you come into the Cath Lab, you will be helped onto a firm X-ray table. The room will have a camera and several TV monitors. Medicine will be given to relax you through your IV line. You may feel drowsy, but usually you will be awake and comfortable during the test.

The radial artery in your wrist is used most often for the test. Other sites, such as the femoral artery in the groin area or a vein on the side of your neck, may be used. The area around the puncture site will be cleaned with a special soap that may feel cold. An anesthetic (numbing medicine) will be injected into the area. A needle will be inserted into the artery and the catheter will be guided into position. This is not usually painful. You may feel pressure and mild discomfort at the puncture site. If needed, more numbing medicine may be given. Contrast dye will be injected into the catheter and carried through your blood vessels. Then, a series of X-rays will be taken.

If a blockage is found, your physician will be contacted. In most cases, treatment is done during the procedure. This may include angioplasty and often stent placement. In angioplasty, a small catheter with a balloon tip is inserted into the narrow artery. The balloon is slowly inflated to open up the artery. At this time, a small metal coil (stent) may also be inserted to keep the narrow artery open. Patients having an angioplasty or stent placement may be required to remain in the hospital overnight.

After the procedure

After returning to your room, you will need to lie flat in bed for a minimum of 2 hours. Longer bed rest is needed after an angioplasty. This allows the artery to seal. If the radial artery was used, a pressure bandage will be placed on your wrist.

Once your bed rest is over, the nurse will help you sit up and walk. After the physician discusses your test results and checks your puncture site, you may be discharged.

If you have an angioplasty or had a stent placed there may be added follow-up care.

At home

It's important to know how to take care of yourself at home as you recover from your cardiac cath. Carefully follow these guidelines.

Fluids

You should drink at least 6 glasses of water (8 ounces each) over the next 24 hours (unless otherwise instructed). Water helps to clear the dye used during the procedure from your body.

Activity

While your wound is healing, bleeding or swelling can occur as a result of stress or strain to the groin and abdominal muscles. Please remember:

- On the day of discharge, limit your activity
- Do not drive for 24 hours
- Showering as usual is OK the following day
- Do not take tub baths for 1 week
- For the first 2 days, climb stairs (as needed) with a slow, steady pace

You may resume your usual activities the day after discharge, but:

- No heavy lifting (more than 10 pounds) for 1 week if your puncture site was in your groin
- If your puncture site was in your wrist:
 - Do not bend your wrist for 24 hours
 - Do not soak your wrist for 3 days (in a bathtub, sink or for other cleaning)
 - Do not lift more than **3 to 5** pounds with your affected wrist for 1 week
- No strenuous physical exercise (such as tennis, running, swimming, golfing, weightlifting or bicycling) for 1 week
- No sexual activity for 1 week

Medications

Please review the medications listed on your After Visit Summary provided by the discharging nurse. Depending on the results of your procedure, your doctor may prescribe new medications. Please make sure you understand which medications you should be taking after the procedure and how often to take them.

If you usually take blood-thinning medication, you may resume _____

Wound care and healing

After the procedure, a small dressing is applied to the wound site. You may remove the dressing the next day. Do not reapply a dressing. Keep site clean and dry. Avoid lotions, ointments or powders at the wound site for 1 week.

The healing wound should be soft and dry. A bruise (black and blue) or a marble-sized lump may be present.

Warning signs and symptoms

Wound changes

Please contact your physician or the Cath Lab physician if any of these signs appear:

- Skin redness around the wound
- Drainage from the wound
- A lump at the puncture site that enlarges or is larger than a marble
- Pain at the puncture site that makes walking difficult
- Numbness or tingling in the thigh or leg
- Calf tenderness or pain
- Increased area of the bruising extending into the thigh, over the buttock or into the groin
- Discoloration or coolness of the leg or foot

If your radial (wrist) artery was used for the procedure, notify the Cath Lab physician if you have arm or hand numbness, coldness, tingling, swelling or pain.

Chest pain and other symptoms

Please notify your physician **right away** if you have:

- Chest discomfort or pain (angina) that radiates to your neck, jaw or arm
- New symptoms or a change in your pattern of angina
- Nausea or profuse sweating
- Shortness of breath with exertion
- An irregular heartbeat
- Lightheadedness or dizziness that makes you lie down
- A fainting spell

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department if you have:

- Chest discomfort or pain lasting longer than 10 minutes that is not relieved by taking 1 nitroglycerin tablet under the tongue
- Frequent, recurring episodes of chest discomfort or pain

If you have any questions about this information, talk to your physician, nurse or the Cath Lab at 312.926.CATH (2284), extension 3.

Arterial bleeding

This occurs when the blood vessel (artery) used during the procedure has reopened. Although rare, it is an emergency requiring ***immediate medical attention***.

- If the puncture is in your groin, immediately lie flat and apply firm pressure to stop the bleeding.
- If the puncture is in your wrist, press firmly on the site with your thumb while supporting your wrist with your other fingers.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department if you have:

- Swelling around the wound that quickly increases or is pulsating
- A lot of blood or a jet of blood pumping out of the puncture site

Either one may occur suddenly.

Follow-up appointments

Cath Lab contact

Please call if you have any problems or questions.

Weekdays: 312.926.CATH (2284), extension 3; (TTY: 312.926.6363)

Weekends, evenings and holidays: Ask for the Cath Lab physician on call