

Right Heart Catheterization

A right-heart catheterization (cath) is a procedure that measures the pressures inside of your heart and main blood vessels in your lungs. It looks at how well your heart is able to pump blood to your body.

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

During the procedure, the physician puts a thin catheter (tube) into a vein either in your groin or the side of your neck. They slowly pass it into the right side of your heart and your pulmonary artery. Then, they take pressure measurements. You will feel little or no pain. The test lasts less than 1 hour.

This brochure will explain what to expect before, during and after the procedure.

Before the procedure

The Cardiac Catheterization Lab (Cath Lab) nurse will call 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:

- Your allergies
- Blood thinner medication you may take
- Diabetes medication you may take

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 medication the nurse has told you to take. Take this medication with small sips of water. On the morning of your procedure, do not take any oral (by mouth) diabetes medication.

Arrival

Please check in on the 8th floor of Galter Pavilion at 675 North St. Clair Street. Parking is available for patients and visitors in the garage at 222 East Huron Street, across from 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. You can validate your ticket at the Customer Services Desk on the 1st, 2nd and 8th floors of 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

The care team will take you to your pre- and post-procedure care room. 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. The care team will put an IV (into the vein) into your arm or hand. They will use the IV for fluids and medications as needed during the procedure. If they will be using the groin vein, the care team will clean and shave your groin area.

The physician will discuss the procedure with you. After the physician has answered your questions, they will ask you to sign consent forms for the test.

You may wear glasses, dentures (or bridgework) and hairpieces. The care team will ask you to empty your bladder just before going into the procedure room.

During the procedure

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

The care team will clean the area around the puncture site with a special soap that may feel cold. The physician will inject an anesthetic (numbing medication) into the area. They will put a needle into the vein and guide the catheter into position. This is not usually painful. You may feel pressure and mild discomfort at the puncture site. If needed, you may get more numbing medication.

After the procedure

After you get back to your room, you will need to lie flat in bed for 1 to 2 hours, depending upon which site (the groin or the neck) was used for the procedure and if you received any relaxing medication. If you got relaxing medication during the procedure, you will have to stay in bed for 2 hours.

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

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.

Activity

You may have bleeding or swelling while the wound is healing. This is due to the stress or strain to the puncture site or surrounding muscles. Carefully follow these guidelines:

- Limit your activity on the day you are discharged.
- Do not drive for 24 hours.
- Do not shower until the next day.

- Do not take tub baths for 1 week.
- Climb stairs (as needed) with a slow, steady pace for the first 2 days.
- Avoid sexual activity for 1 week.

You may go back to doing your usual activities the day after discharge. This includes social activities. Do not do strenuous physical exercise for 1 week (such as tennis, running, swimming, golfing, weightlifting and bicycling).

Wound care and healing

After the procedure, you will have a small bandage over the wound site. You can take the bandage off the next day. Leave it open to air. Do not cover it with a new bandage. Keep the site clean and dry. Do not use any lotions, ointments or powders at the wound site for 1 week.

The wound should be soft and dry while it is healing. There may be a bruise (black and blue) or a marble-sized lump.

Warning signs and symptoms

Wound changes

Please contact your physician or the Cath Lab physician if you have any of these symptoms:

- Redness, swelling or color changes around the wound or the limb
- Drainage from the wound
- A lump at the wound site that gets bigger or is larger than the size of a marble
- Pain at the puncture site that makes it hard to move
- Numbness, tingling or coolness in the area around the wound, or in the thigh or leg
- Bruising that spreads into the thigh, over the buttock or into the groin
- Discoloration or coolness of the leg or foot

Chest pain and other symptoms

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

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

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

- Chest discomfort or pain lasting longer than 10 minutes that does not go away after you take 1 nitroglycerin tablet under the tongue
- Frequent, recurring episodes of chest discomfort or pain

Bleeding

If you notice bleeding or oozing from the puncture wound, please:

1. Lie flat right away.
2. Put firm pressure just above the puncture site and hold the firm pressure for 15 minutes. You may use a clean cloth or tissue to apply pressure. If possible, have another person apply the pressure.
3. After 15 minutes, remove the pressure. The wound should be dry, flat and not bleeding. You should continue to lie flat for about 1 hour before getting up and walking.
4. Cover the wound with an adhesive bandage. Tell your physician about this bleeding.

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

- Minor bleeding that lasts for more than 15 minutes
- Swelling that seems to be increasing

Cath Lab contact

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Cardiac Catheterization Lab.

- During regular business hours (8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday), call 312.926.2284 (312.926.CATH), extension 3 (TTY: 711).
- After hours and on the weekends, call 312.926.2284 and ask for the Cardiac Catheterization Lab physician on call.