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A Legacy of Care

Coronary Angiogram (Cardiac Catheterisation)

Coronary angiogram is a test to check your heart's coronary arteries. These blood vessels feed blood, oxygen and nutrients to your heart.

If your coronary arteries are narrowed, you may have angina symptoms such as chest pain or pressure or shortness of breath. Narrowed arteries also increase your risk of a heart attack.

Sometimes your doctor can treat a problem found during the test e.g. narrowed arteries can be opened with angioplasty. In other cases, treatments like coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) or angioplasty need to be done at a later time.

How is the test done?

This test is done in a cardiac catheterisation laboratory (Cath Lab).

- A thin tube called a catheter is placed into a blood vessel through the skin on your arm or groin. The catheter is threaded through the blood vessel to your heart
- Dye is injected through the catheter. Your doctor will take X-ray pictures of the dye as it moves through the coronary arteries and the heart. The pictures show where coronary arteries are narrowed.

What can you expect?

Before and during the test

- Most patients are told not to eat or drink anything (except for a small amount of water) for at least 4 to 6 hours before the test.
- Follow your doctor's instructions on which of your usual medicines to take. Take them with a sip of water only.
- Before the test you will receive medicine to help you relax. You will then be required to lie on the X-ray table.
- You will get an injection to numb the skin where the catheter will be inserted. You will have a feeling of pressure when the doctor moves the catheter through the blood vessel. It is usually not painful.
- You may be asked to breathe out, cough, hold your breath or do other simple requests during the test.
- The test takes about 30 minutes. But you need time to get ready for it and time to recover. It can take up to 6 hours in total.



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After the test

- The catheter will be removed. A nurse may press on the bandage placed on the opening to prevent bleeding.
- You will be taken to a room where the catheter site and your heart rate, blood pressure and temperature will be checked several times and given instructions for what to do when you return home.
- If the catheter was put in your groin you will have to lie in bed with your leg straight for at least 6 hours after the test.
- If the catheter was put in your arm a tight wrist band will be applied and removed after 4 hours.
- You may or may not need to stay in the Hospital overnight. You will get more instructions for what to do when you return home.

What are some of the risks?

Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of this test.

Risks of this test include:

- Having an allergic reaction to the dye used
- Bleeding from the spot where the catheter was inserted
- Having a heart attack, stroke, or other serious problem. These are very rare.