

Look inside your heart

What to expect from cardiac catheterization

Today, cardiac catheterization is an effective procedure that can help physicians pinpoint the location of a blocked artery. It tells them how extensive a blockage is and how narrow the heart valves have become.

STEP BY STEP

Unless your catheterization is being performed on an emergency basis, you'll likely spend the night before the procedure at home, where you'll be asked not to eat or drink anything after midnight. In the morning, technicians will clip the areas where the catheter will be inserted (usually either side of the groin). You'll be awake but lightly sedated throughout the procedure, which takes place on a special X-ray table that moves back and forth.

Your cardiologist will use a local anesthetic to numb the spot where the puncture will be made. He or she will then thread a catheter (usually about the diameter of thin spaghetti) through the blood vessel and into the heart.

A TV screen shows X-ray images of the catheter as it's

threaded through the artery and into the heart's chambers. The images help the cardiologist guide the catheter into position. With the catheter properly placed, your cardiologist can then carry out necessary tests, such as measuring blood pressure.

If you're undergoing coronary angiography, a variation of the catheterization technique, your physician will inject a contrast dye through the catheter into the blood vessels and heart chambers. Coronary angiography produces sharp X-ray images that point physicians to the site, shape and extent of blockages—information that can't be found by any other method.

A cardiac catheterization usually takes about 30 minutes and can be performed on an outpatient basis. You shouldn't feel any pain, and discomfort will be minimal. A feeling of pressure is common when the catheter is being threaded through the artery or vein. Sometimes a burning sensation occurs when the contrast dye is injected, but this feeling disappears quickly, as do other, less common reactions such as nausea and vomiting.



Be heart smart!

Jose Mathew, M.D., and Reymond Meadaa, M.D., cardiologists at Byrd Regional Hospital (BRH), offer adult cardiovascular evaluation and treatment, diagnostic cardiac catheterizations, electrocardiograms, echocardiograms, stress testing and more. To learn more about cardiology services at BRH, visit

www.byrdregional.com, or to find a physician who's right for you, call (337) 239-5113.



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