

A GUIDE FOR PATIENTS AND FAMILIES

Cardiac Catheterization

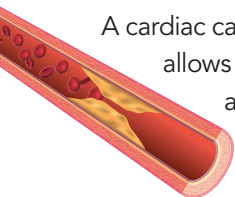
What You Need to Know About
Your Upcoming Procedure



**ENGLEWOOD
HEALTH**

Thank you for choosing the Englewood Health Cardiac Catheterization Lab for your upcoming procedure. A cardiac catheterization is a very important procedure that will help your doctor choose the best treatment for your heart condition. This guide provides an overview of the procedure and will help you prepare for it. This brochure is not a substitute for medical advice; be sure to speak to your cardiologist if you have any questions about your condition and your cardiac catheterization.

What is a cardiac catheterization?



A cardiac catheterization is a procedure that allows a cardiologist to see your coronary arteries (the vessels that bring blood and oxygen to the heart muscle) and how well blood flows through them. This test is performed by inserting a thin, hollow tube called a catheter into a blood vessel that leads to your heart. During the catheterization, the cardiologist may also evaluate the valves in your heart to check for abnormalities.

Englewood Health's Cardiac Catheterization Lab

A cardiac catheterization is done in a specially equipped X-ray room called a cardiac catheterization laboratory, or cath lab. Above the X-ray table is a large X-ray camera and monitors that display the X-ray images. The lab also has heart monitors and other special equipment.

The cath lab team includes a cardiologist, a nurse, and two technicians. Though cardiac catheterization is not surgery, the team members wear gloves, gowns, and masks to prevent infection.

Beginning the Procedure

Once you are in the cath lab, the team will transfer you to the X-ray table. The room is kept cool, as the X-ray machines require lower temperatures. The team will give you warm blankets to help keep you comfortable.

Several small sticky patches called electrodes will be placed on your chest, arms, and legs. The electrodes will be connected to a heart monitor, which will track your heart rhythm during the catheterization. You may hear the beeping sound of the monitor as it records your heartbeat.

A member of the team will clean the area where the catheter is to be inserted and cover it with a sterile drape. During this time, you will be given sedation, as well as a local anesthetic to numb the catheter insertion site.

Once the insertion site is numb, a small tube called a sheath will be inserted into a blood vessel. The cardiologist will place the catheter into the sheath and carefully guide it toward your heart. X-ray images taken during the procedure will be displayed on the screens above so the team can visualize them.



What the Cardiac Catheterization Shows

The X-ray images show how blood flows through the coronary arteries. If there are any blockages, the cardiologist can pinpoint them and determine the degree of narrowing.

The procedure also produces X-rays that show the heart's main pumping chamber (the left ventricle) during its pumping action, as well as how well the heart valves are working. To obtain these images, the doctor places a special catheter in the left ventricle and injects a contrast dye through it.



What to Expect During the Procedure

A cardiac catheterization usually lasts about one hour. It is important that you lie still on the X-ray table the entire time. The team will do its best to help you remain comfortable.

Though the procedure is usually not painful, you will likely experience some unusual feelings or sensations. You will feel a stinging or burning sensation when the catheter insertion site (usually in the groin or wrist area) is anesthetized. You also may feel some pressure in the area where the sheath is placed. But you will not feel the catheter moving through the blood vessels and into your heart. You may be given medication to help you relax.

When the contrast dye is injected into the left ventricle, you may feel a warm sensation all over your body (a “hot flash”) that lasts from about 10 to 20 seconds.

If you feel any discomfort or unusual sensations during the procedure, tell the doctor or nurse so he or she can make you more comfortable.

After the Cardiac Catheterization

Whether you are having the procedure as an admitted patient or as an outpatient, the care following a cardiac catheterization is the same.

Once the procedure is completed, the tube is removed from the insertion site. In some cases, it is removed in the procedure room, in other cases in the recovery area.

In the recovery area, you will lie still, to allow the hole in the blood vessel to heal. During this period of bed rest, which is usually from 2 to 6 hours, do not bend the arm or leg where the catheter was inserted.

If your leg gets stiff, you may move your foot or wiggle your toes. You also may bend your other leg at the knee, to ease any stress on your back. If you need to cough, laugh, sneeze, or strain when lifting your head from the pillow, place your hand over the insertion site and apply pressure. This will help to prevent bleeding from the insertion site.

Our team will assist you if you need to use a bedpan or urinal during bed rest.

A nurse will check your pulse and blood pressure frequently. He or she will also periodically check the insertion site. If you feel sudden pain at the insertion site or notice a warm, sticky, and wet sensation, tell the nurse immediately.

You will be able to eat shortly after arriving at the recovery area. You will either receive fluid through an IV or be asked to drink plenty of liquids. This is to flush the contrast dye from your body through your urine.

If you are being discharged home from the cath lab, the team will give you additional discharge instructions.

Englewood Health complies with applicable federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex.

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