

# Catheter Embolization



Embolization is a procedure to block a blood vessel. It is done to stop severe bleeding or to stop blood flow to a part of the body. To do this, a thin, flexible tube called a catheter is put into the specific blood vessel that needs to be blocked. Initially, this would be done after going into a peripheral artery or vein in your arm or groin. It is often done by a healthcare provider called an interventional radiologist. This procedure may be done alone, or before or after surgery or other treatment.

## Why is catheter embolization done?

The procedure may be done to:

- Control bleeding in an emergency
- Block blood flow to a cancerous tumor
- Block blood flow to a uterine fibroid
- Treat arteriovenous malformations in the brain and body

## Possible risks and complications

Risks and complications depend on the part of the body being treated. Talk to your radiologist. Risks can include:

- Blood clots, damage to an artery
- Stroke
- Death
- Infection or bruising around the catheter insertion site
- Pain
- Problems due to contrast medium, including allergic reaction or kidney damage
- The chance that the embolic agent could lodge in the wrong place and deprive normal tissue of its oxygen supply

For uterine fibroid embolization, risks include:

- Cramping
- Fever
- Cessation of menstrual cycles (rare)
- Problems with future fertility

## How do I get ready for the procedure?

You will be told how to prepare for your procedure. Follow these instructions carefully. Also do the following:

- Do not eat or drink before the procedure, as directed by your healthcare provider.

- Tell the healthcare provider:
  - What medicines you take. This includes herbs and supplements.
  - If you are pregnant or may be pregnant.
  - If you are allergic to contrast medium (X-ray dye) or other medicines.

## What happens during the procedure?

Before the procedure starts, you may be given a sedative through an IV (intravenous) line in your hand or arm. This medicine will make you relaxed and sleepy. Or you will be given general anesthesia to put you in a deep sleep through the procedure. Local anesthetic is also used. This blocks pain at the site where the catheter is inserted. The procedure is then started.

- A small incision is made over the insertion site. A catheter is put into the blood vessel. It is then moved to the area to be treated.
- Contrast medium is injected through the catheter. This makes the artery and catheter stand out on X-ray pictures. The movement of the catheter is viewed on a video screen.
- A material or medicine is sent through the catheter to the vessel that needs to be blocked.
- The procedure is repeated in each blood vessel that needs to be blocked.
- The catheter is then taken out. Firm pressure is put on the insertion site for about 15 minutes to stop bleeding.

## What happens after the procedure?

Directions will vary depending on why you had the procedure. If the catheter was inserted in your groin, you will need to lie flat with your leg straight for several hours. You may go home the same day. Or you may stay in the hospital or surgery center 1 or more nights. Follow any directions you have been given about recovering at home.

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