

Cardiac catheterization - discharge

Catheterization - cardiac - discharge; Heart catheterization - discharge: Catheterization - cardiac; Heart catheterization; Angina - cardiac catheterization discharge; CAD - cardiac catheterization discharge; Coronary artery disease - cardiac catheterization discharge

Cardiac catheterization involves passing a thin flexible tube (catheter) into the right or left side of the heart. The catheter is most often inserted from the groin or the arm. This article discusses how to care for yourself after this procedure.

When You're in the Hospital

A catheter was inserted into an artery in your groin or arm. Then it was carefully guided up to your heart. Once it reached your heart, the catheter was placed in the arteries that deliver blood to your heart. Then contrast dye was injected. The dye allowed your heart doctor to see any areas in your coronary arteries that were blocked or narrowed.

If you had a blockage, you may have had angioplasty and a stent ([/health-library/discharge-instructions/angioplasty-and-stent-heart-discharge](#)) placed in your coronary artery during the procedure.

What to Expect at Home



You may feel pain in your groin or arm where the catheter was placed. You may also have some bruising around and below the incision that was made to insert the catheter.

Self-care

In general, people who have angioplasty can walk around within 6 hours or less after the procedure. Complete recovery takes a week or less. Keep the area where the catheter was inserted dry for 24 to 48 hours. If the catheter was inserted in your arm, recovery is often faster.

If the heart doctor put the catheter in through your groin:

- Walking short distances on a flat surface is OK. Limit going up and down stairs to around twice a day for the first 2 to 3 days.
- Do not do yard work, drive, squat lift heavy objects, or play sports for at least 2 days, or until your health care provider tells you it is OK.

If the heart doctor put the catheter in your arm:

- Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms). (This is a little more than a gallon of milk).
- Do not do any heavy pushing, pulling, or twisting.

For a catheter in your groin or arm:

- Avoid sexual activity for 2 to 5 days. Ask your heart doctor when it will be safe to start again.
- You should be able to return to work in 2 to 3 days if you do not do heavy work.
- Do not take a bath or swim for the first week. You may take showers, but make sure the area where the catheter was inserted does not get wet for the first 24 to 48 hours.

You will need to take care of your incision.

- Your heart doctor will tell you how often to change your dressing.
- If your incision bleeds, lie down and put pressure on it for 30 minutes.

Many people take aspirin (</health-library/selfcare-instructions/aspirin-and-heart-disease>), often with another medicine such as clopidogrel (</health-library/selfcare-instructions/clopidogrel-plavix>) (Plavix), prasugrel (Efient), or ticagrelor (Brilinta) after this procedure. These medicines are blood thinners, and they keep your blood from forming clots in your arteries and stent. A blood clot can lead to a heart attack. Take the medicines exactly as your heart doctor tells you. Do not stop taking them without talking to your heart doctor.

You should eat a heart-healthy diet (</health-library/nutrition/heart-disease-and-heart-healthy-diet>), exercise, and follow a healthy lifestyle. Your provider can refer you to other health experts who can help you learn about exercise and healthy foods that fit into your lifestyle.

When to Call the Doctor

Contact your heart doctor if:

- There is bleeding at the catheter insertion site that does not stop when you apply pressure.
- Your arm or leg below where the catheter was inserted changes color, is numb to the touch, or is numb.
- The small incision for your catheter becomes red or painful, or yellow or green discharge is draining from it.
- You have chest pain or shortness of breath that does not go away with rest.
- Your pulse feels irregular -- it is very slow (fewer than 60 beats a minute) or very fast (over 100 to 120 beats a minute).
- You have dizziness, fainting, or you are very tired.
- You are coughing up blood or yellow or green mucus.
- You have problems taking any of your heart medicines.
- You have chills or a fever over 101°F (38.3°C).

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[▼](#) References

Patient Information

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