

What is Cardiac Catheterization?

Understanding the Procedure:

Cardiac catheterization is a minimally invasive procedure used to diagnose and treat certain heart conditions. During the procedure, a thin, flexible tube (catheter) is inserted into a blood vessel and guided to the heart. It provides valuable information about how well your heart is working and can even be used to perform treatments.

When is Cardiac Catheterization Needed?

Your doctor may recommend a cardiac catheterization to:

- Diagnose coronary artery disease
- Evaluate heart valve function
- Measure blood pressure and oxygen levels in different parts of the heart
- Assess heart muscle function after a heart attack
- Treat heart conditions with procedures like angioplasty and stenting

Common Symptoms Leading to Cardiac Catheterization:

- Chest pain or discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue, especially during activity
- Irregular heartbeat

What to Expect Before the Procedure:

- Fasting: You'll likely be asked to fast for 6-8 hours before the procedure.
- Medications: Discuss with your doctor which medications you should continue or pause.
- Allergies: Inform your healthcare team of any allergies, especially to contrast dye or iodine.
- Hospital Preparation: Expect to arrive early for check-in and initial assessments.

What happens during the procedure?

The Procedure:

- **Local Anesthesia:** The insertion site (usually in your wrist or groin) is numbed.
- **Catheter Insertion:** A thin catheter is guided through your blood vessels to your heart.
- **Imaging & Testing:** Contrast dye is injected, allowing X-ray images to show any blockages or abnormalities.
- **Possible Treatments:** If a blockage is found, treatments like angioplasty (ballooning) or stent placement may be performed during the procedure.

What to Expect After the Procedure:

- **Monitoring:** You'll be monitored in a recovery area for several hours. The insertion site may feel sore or bruised.
- **Activity Restrictions:** Avoid heavy lifting and strenuous activities for a few days.
- **Driving:** You'll need someone to drive you home as you shouldn't operate a vehicle until the effects of the anesthesia wear off.
- **Follow-Up Care:** Your doctor will discuss the results and next steps for treatment or management.

Risk & Complications:

Cardiac catheterization is generally safe, but as with any procedure, there are risks:

- Bleeding or infection at the insertion site
- Allergic reaction to the contrast dye
- Blood clots or damage to the blood vessel
- Rarely, heart attack, stroke, kidney injury or arrhythmia

How to prepare at home:

- **Medication Management:** Follow your doctor's instructions regarding blood thinners or other medications.
- **Hydration:** Drink plenty of water to help flush the contrast dye from your system after the procedure.
- **Watch for Signs of Complications:** Contact your doctor if you experience severe pain, swelling, redness, or a fever.

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