

Cardiac Catheterisation

CA01 Lite - Expires end of January 2026



This fact sheet is for general information about this procedure only. It is not intended to be used as medical advice or to replace advice that your relevant healthcare professional would give you. If you have a particular medical problem, please consult a healthcare professional.

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What is a cardiac catheterisation?

A cardiac catheterisation, or coronary angiogram, is a test to find out if you have any problems with the coronary arteries (blood vessels that supply your heart muscle with oxygen), and how well the pumping chambers and valves in your heart are working. It is performed by a cardiologist (heart specialist).

What are the benefits?

Your doctor may be concerned that you have one of the following problems:

- Narrowed or blocked coronary arteries.
- Damaged or faulty heart valves.
- Weak heart muscle.

The procedure should help your doctor to decide on the best treatment for you.

Are there any alternatives?

You can have exercise tests and scans, which have fewer risks. However, they may not give your doctor enough information to decide on the best treatment for you.

What does the procedure involve?

A cardiac catheterisation usually takes about 30 minutes.

The sheath is usually inserted in your radial artery near your wrist or your femoral artery near your groin.

Your cardiologist will inject local anaesthetic into the area over the artery.

When your cardiologist is satisfied that the sheath is in the right position, they will insert a catheter (long, narrow plastic tube) through the sheath and into your artery.

Your cardiologist will pass the catheter along your artery to your heart.

Your cardiologist will inject dye into the catheter so they can take x-rays.

When your cardiologist has got all the information they need they will remove the catheter and sheath.

What complications can happen?

- Bleeding
- More serious bleeding, including internal bleeding
- Bruising
- Developing a collection of blood
- Infection
- Kidney damage
- False aneurysm (lump that connects to the artery)
- Radiation exposure
- Allergic reaction to the equipment, materials, medication or dye
- Blood clot (thrombosis) in the artery where the sheath was inserted
- Losing your limb if a thrombosis is not noticed or treated early
- Change in heart rhythm
- Blood leaking into the sac that surrounds your heart
- Heart attack
- Stroke
- Drop in blood pressure
- Radial artery spasm
- Death. The risk is less the fitter you are

What happens after the procedure?

You should be able to go home the same day.

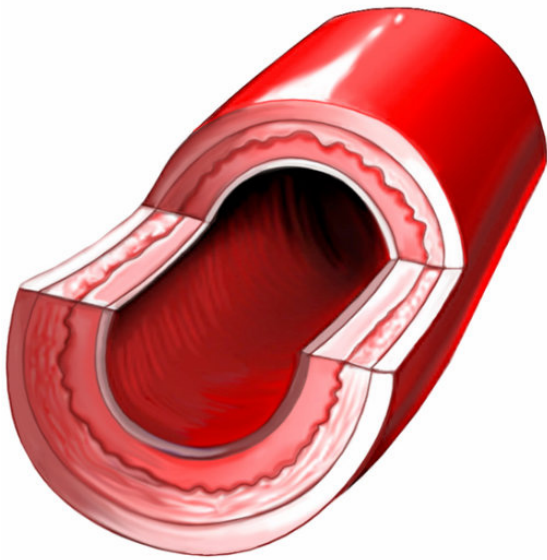
Do not have a hot bath for 2 to 3 days.

Regular exercise should improve your long-term health. Before you start exercising, ask the healthcare team or your GP for advice.

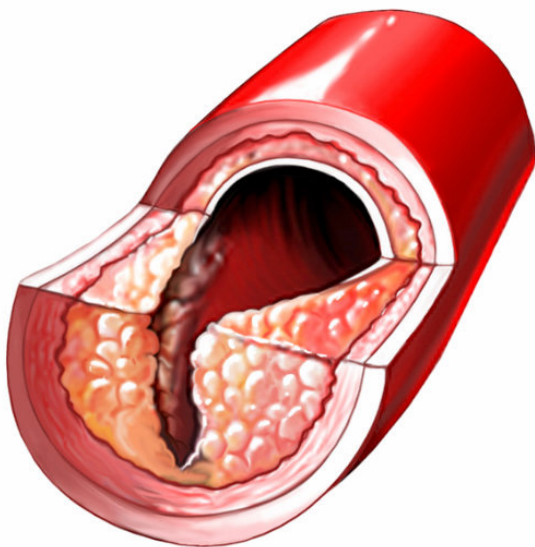
The results of the x-rays and blood samples should be available the same day.

Summary

A cardiac catheterisation is usually a safe and effective way of finding out about the problems you are having with your heart.



A normal artery



A narrowed artery

Keep this information document. Use it to help you if you need to talk to the healthcare team.

Some information, such as risk and complication statistics, is taken from global studies and/or databases. Please ask your surgeon or doctor for more information about the risks that are specific to you, and they may be able to tell you about any other suitable treatments options.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant healthcare team would give you.

Reviewer

David Prior (MBBS, BMedSc, PhD, FRACP, DDU, FACC, FSCANZ)

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