



Grand Rapids Cardiology

What to Expect

Cardiac Catheterization

A Cardiac Catheterization allows a physician to examine a patient's heart for pumping function, check for blockage in the arteries bringing blood to the heart, and measure pressures within the heart. Patients are usually given a mild sedative prior to the procedure. This will help you feel more relaxed and maybe a bit sleepy. This test is done in a sterile room with special cameras to take x-ray pictures of your heart. Most cardiac catheterizations are done through a large artery in the groin, although they can be done from the wrist or elbow area. The nurse or technician will cleanse and shave the groin (or arm) area and cover you with sterile drapes. The doctor will then numb the area and insert a small hollow tube or sheath into the artery in your groin (or arm). The physician can then thread special catheters (long, thin plastic tubes) up to the heart. Through these specially shaped catheters, the physician can inject x-ray contrast dye and take x-ray pictures of the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle and the main pumping chamber of the heart. Some people may notice a mild discomfort or "hot flash" following the dye injection which will last only a few seconds.

During the catheterization, the physician can view the x-ray images on special TV screens. The entire procedure can take as little as 20 minutes or sometimes more than an hour, depending on how many and what type of measurements are taken. After the physician has completed the procedure, the sheaths are removed from the groin (or arm) and a nurse or cath lab technician will hold pressure on the site to allow the small hole in the artery to close. A special dressing, pressure device or sandbag may be placed on the site at this time. You will be asked to lie flat and still for several hours after the procedure to allow the hole in the artery to seal. Some physicians use a type of vascular closure device to seal the puncture in the artery. You should follow your physician's specific instructions about activity following the use of one of these devices. Most patients will go home several hours after the procedure, but because you have been given medication to relax you, please plan to have someone drive you home. After your procedure, it is normal for the puncture site to be a bit tender and bruised, and a small knot may even develop. If you notice redness, drainage, severe pain or swelling, talk to your doctor to see if further evaluation is indicated.

In most cases, you will be asked to come to the hospital in the morning, and depending on the results, you may be able to leave later that afternoon. You will want to bring a change of clothes and toiletries in case you need to stay in the hospital. Prior to the procedure, you will be told not to eat or drink anything after a certain time. Your doctor will inform you which of your medications you should take prior to the procedure, and which medications to avoid before your catheterization. Please inform your doctor if you have had a previous allergic reaction to x-ray contrast dye or shellfish. He or she will prescribe medications to reduce the risk of an allergic reaction. Please inform your doctor if you have a history of kidney disease.



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If you are diabetic, hold your coumadin 3 days prior. Hold your Metformin the day prior to your procedure, the day of your procedure and one day after. Continue your Long-Acting Insulin. Hold your Short Acting Insulin if you have been instructed to not eat or drink anything the day of your test. Restart your Short Acting Insulin when your diet resumes.

Continue to take all cardiac medications as usual.

You may take your medications with a small sip of water.

If you need to reschedule the test or have any questions regarding these instructions, please call our office at 616-717-5141.