

The cardiologist will numb the insertion site with a local anesthetic. You may feel a stinging sensation around the site as the anesthetic takes effect. If you feel any pain or discomfort when the procedure starts, tell a staff member immediately.

The catheter, which is about as thick as a toothpick, will be guided through the vessel to your heart with the help of x-ray images. You will be awake during the test, but you should not feel any pain. You may, however, feel pressure or the sensation that your heart is skipping a beat. The cardiologist or another staff member may ask you to take deep breaths or to change positions in order to get better x-ray images.

The catheterization will last 15 minutes to an hour. After the test, the cardiologist will analyze the x-rays and send a report to your physician, who will review the results with you.

What happens after the test?

After the test, you will spend 15 to 30 minutes in the recovery area within the lab. You will then be moved to a room in the Ambulatory Care Unit. You will be discharged from this room when you are ready.

You may stay in bed for up to six hours with your head flat on the pillow and your leg straight.

The cardiologist may be able to use a closure device on your catheterization site to decrease the amount of bed rest required. You will be given special instructions if this device is used on you.

Your nurse will check your pulse, blood pressure and dressing frequently. Before you are discharged, he or she will give you a list of restrictions and demonstrate how you should care for your catheterization site.

Whom can I contact after the test?

If you have any questions after you have been discharged, please call the First Commonwealth Cardiac Catheterization Digital Angiography Unit at 724-357-8035, the Ambulatory Care Unit at 724-357-7090 or your physician.

If you have any of the following symptoms within **24 hours** of your catheterization, contact your physician **immediately**.

- Numbness or pain in your arm or leg
- Itching or red blotches on your skin
- Difficulty breathing
- Heart palpitations or an irregular heartbeat
- Bleeding or swelling at the catheterization site
- Chest pain

First Commonwealth Cardiac Catheterization & Digital Angiography Unit



A Patient's Guide

INDIANA
REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

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What is cardiac catheterization?

Cardiac catheterization is a test used to evaluate the anatomy and function of the heart and coronary arteries --- the arteries that supply blood to the heart. This test is highly effective for...

- detecting blockages in the heart and coronary arteries
- determining if the valves between the heart's chambers are working properly
- evaluating the heart's muscle strength and pumping action

Cardiac catheterization involves the use of moving x-ray images to examine the heart and coronary arteries. During the test, the physician inserts a catheter (a long, thin, flexible tube) into a blood vessel, all the way to the heart. The physician then releases a dye into the heart through the catheter. The dye makes the x-ray images of the heart more clear, which allows the physician to better examine the heart's anatomy and function.

The catheter can also be used to measure the pressure in the heart's chambers and arteries. This allows the physician to obtain an accurate blood-pressure reading and evaluate the function of the heart's valves.

During the catheterization, the physician and other staff members view x-ray images of the heart on an eye-level monitor. These images are also stored on a computer, and the physician examines them in greater detail after the test. If the physician finds any abnormalities he or she will make recommendations for treatment

How do I prepare for the test?

Within two weeks of your cardiac catheterization, you will visit the Ambulatory Care Unit at Indiana Regional Medical Center for tests and other preparations. Tests your physician may order include an electrocardiogram (a record of the heart's electrical activity, also called an EKG) and blood tests to check your kidney function and your blood's ability to clot.

The nurses in the Ambulatory Care Unit will review the procedure, preparations and recovery process with you. They will also ask you questions about your medical history, allergies, medications and other health information.

Closer to the time of your test you will receive instructions on what you should and should not do prior to the test. Some blood thinning medications such as coumadin will be held for a few days prior to your catheterization. This will be done under the order of your doctor and will be communicated to you.

On the night before your test...

- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight.
- When brushing your teeth, do not swallow any water.

On the morning of your test...

- You may take your heart medications with small sips of water.
- Again, when brushing your teeth, do not swallow any water.

On the morning of your test...

- Urinate (for your comfort, due to the amount of fluid you will be receiving and the amount of bed rest required after the test.)

- You may wear your glasses, if you wish, during the test.

What happens the day of my test?

On the day of your test, you will most likely register in the Ambulatory Care Unit. Nurses will start an intravenous (IV) line in your arm to keep your body well hydrated before, during and after the test. Adequate hydration will help to flush the dye out of your system.

When it is time for your test, you will be transported to the holding area in the cardiac catheterization laboratory. This lab was designed specifically for cardiac catheterization.

A cardiologist, a physician who specializes in the treatment of heart disease, will perform your catheterization with the help of nurses and x-ray technologists. The cardiologist and the other staff members have extensive training in cardiac catheterization.

Prior to your test, the cardiologist will explain what will take place and any risks involved. Please ask the cardiologist any questions you have. You will then be asked to sign a consent form.

While you are in the holding area, you may be given medication to help you relax, but this medication will not make you sleep.

During the test, you will lie on a flat table, and a rotating x-ray tube will be positioned very close to your chest. For your safety, your heart will be monitored throughout the procedure.

The catheter will be inserted through a blood vessel in your groin or arm. Prior to the insertion, this site will be cleaned and shaved if necessary, and you will be covered with a sterile drape.