

What is a Coronary Angiogram?

Why do I need this test?

The coronary arteries supply your heart muscle with blood. They can become clogged from a buildup of cholesterol, cells or other substances. This can reduce the flow of blood to your heart. If a blood clot forms and completely blocks blood flow through that artery, a heart attack may occur.

A coronary angiogram is a special X-ray test. It's done to find out if your coronary arteries are clogged, where and by how much. An angiogram can help your doctor see if you

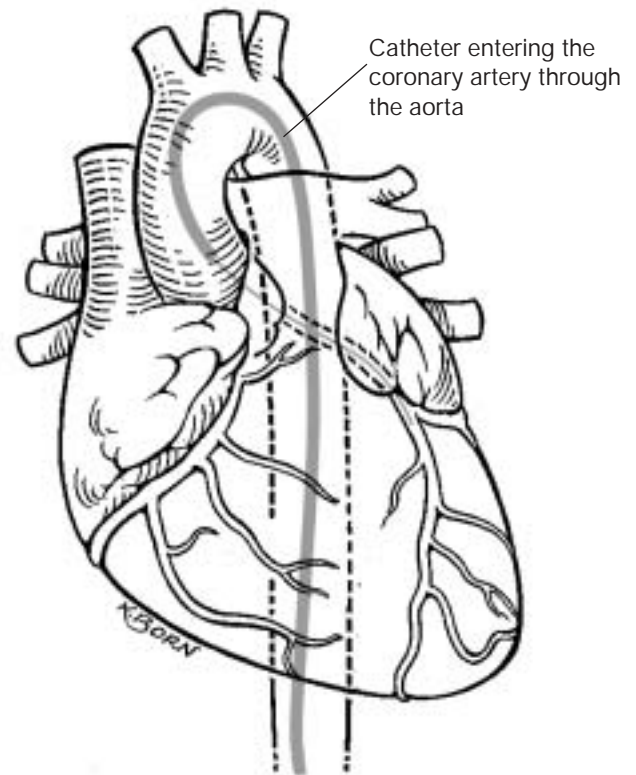
need treatment such as angioplasty, coronary artery bypass surgery or medical therapy.

Angioplasty isn't necessary for all blockages. Sometimes all you need to do is take medicines and:

- Lower your blood pressure.
- Stop smoking.
- Reduce the cholesterol in your blood.
- Eat a healthy diet.
- Stay physically active.

What happens during an angiogram?

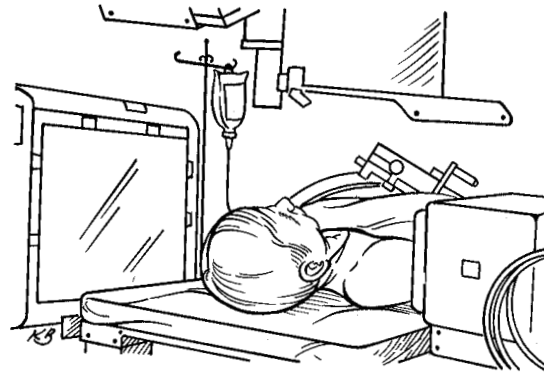
- You may be given medicine to relax you, but will stay awake.
- You go to the hospital's heart catheterization laboratory, or "cath lab."
- You lie on a hard table near a camera and other equipment.
- Your doctor numbs a spot on your groin or arm and inserts a thin tube (catheter) into an artery and up to the heart. This will hurt no more than a blood test.
- Special fluid goes through the catheter so arteries show up well on the X-ray.
- Many X-rays are taken as the fluid goes through the artery.
- You may be asked to hold your breath or cough.
- By studying the X-ray, the doctor can see any problems with your coronary arteries.
- If you wish, you can see the X-ray pictures on the screen during or after the test.



An angiogram is a kind of X-ray test that can show if you have clogged arteries and if so, how many blockages there are, how severe they are, and what if anything needs to be done about them. If you have blockages, you will need either medicines, angioplasty, or open heart surgery, depending on how many there are, how severe they are, and exactly where they are located.

What might I feel?

- Slight pressure as the catheter is put in
- Rarely, some chest discomfort as the fluid goes in
- An urge to urinate
- Rarely, nausea
- If a picture of the heart's main pumping chamber is taken (and it's taken during about 2/3 of angiograms) you'll feel a hot flash sensation from head to toe that will last for 20 seconds.



During the angiogram, you'll be awake so you can do as your doctor asks.

What happens after the test?

- The catheter will be taken out.
- A nurse or doctor will apply direct pressure for 15 minutes or longer where the catheter was inserted to make sure there is no internal bleeding.
- You will be asked to lie quietly on your back for several hours. You will not have to lie on your back if the catheterization was performed from an arm artery.
- You will go back to your hospital room or Cardiac Care Unit (CCU).
- You may feel sore where the catheter was inserted or from lying on your back.
- Your doctor will talk to you about the results.

How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721), or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease.
3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit us online at StrokeAssociation.org.

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor or nurse?

- Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

How long do I stay in the hospital?

Will I need surgery?