



## What Is a Coronary Angiogram?

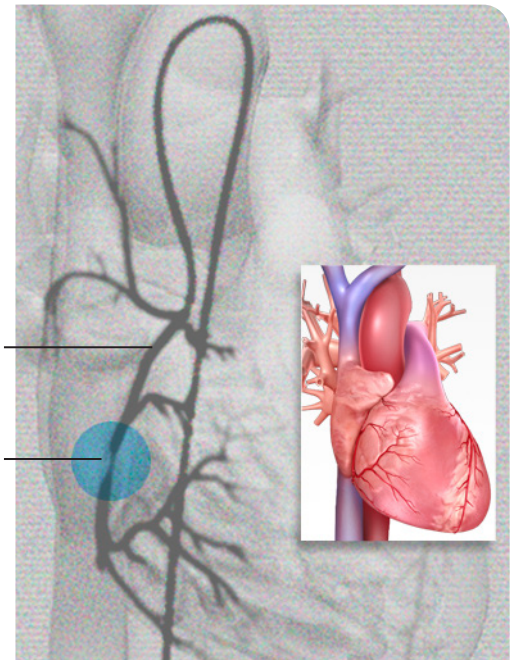
A coronary angiogram is a special X-ray test. It shows whether your coronary arteries are narrowed or blocked.

The coronary arteries supply your heart muscle with blood. They can become clogged from a buildup of cholesterol, cells or other substances (plaque). This can reduce the blood flow to your heart. If plaque in a heart artery breaks, a blood clot forms. The clot further blocks the blood flow through the narrowed artery. If the blood flow is completely blocked to part of the heart muscle, it can result in a heart attack.

An angiogram can help show where and the percentage your arteries are blocked. This information helps your health care team choose what treatment you need.

Right coronary artery injected with X-ray contrast dye to show blockage or narrowing inside the artery

Narrowing of right coronary artery



### What happens during an angiogram?

- You go to the hospital's heart catheterization lab ("cath lab") for the test.
- You'll have an intravenous (IV) line inserted into a vein in your arm. You may be given medicine to help you relax through the IV, as well as other medications and fluids. You will stay awake for the test.
- You lie on a table near a camera and other equipment.
- Spots on your groin or arm will be numbed and a thin tube (catheter) will be inserted into an artery and up to your heart.
- Special fluid goes through the catheter. This fluid makes your arteries show up well on the X-ray.
- X-rays are taken as the fluid goes through your arteries.
- You may be asked to hold your breath or cough.
- Your health care professional will study the X-ray images for any problems with your coronary arteries.
- You can see the X-ray pictures on the screen during or after the test if you wish.
- The test takes between 30-50 minutes.

### What might I feel?

- Slight pressure as the catheter is put in
- An urge to urinate
- A sense of warmth all over the body from the fluid

Some people might have nausea or feel some chest discomfort as the fluid goes in. These symptoms are rare and may only occur for a short time.

### What happens after the test?

Right after your 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 have to lie on your back for several hours after the test if the catheter was inserted into your groin. This also helps prevent any bleeding.

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- You will go back to your hospital room or cardiac care unit.
- You may feel sore where the catheter was inserted or from lying on your back.
- Most people go home the same day as the test.

### What happens next?

Your health care team will talk to you about the test results. If your results show that you have severe narrowing or blockages, treatment options include:

- **Angioplasty or stent.** These procedures help open up your arteries by pushing the plaque flat against the artery wall. This widens the artery and improves blood flow.
- **Coronary artery bypass graft (CABG) surgery.** This is a surgery where one of your healthy arteries is taken from another part of your body and attached above and below the blockage in your artery. This helps blood flow around the blockage.

If you have coronary artery narrowing that doesn't limit blood flow, you may not need a procedure. Instead, you may be prescribed medications and lifestyle changes to help manage your blood pressure and lower your cholesterol to prevent further plaque build up.

Lifestyle changes that can help reduce your cholesterol include:

- Stopping smoking and avoiding secondhand smoke
- Following a heart-healthy eating plan
- Being physically active



After your angiogram, your health care team will discuss the results with you.

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721) or visit [heart.org](https://www.heart.org) to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up for our monthly *Heart Insight* e-news for heart patients and their families at [HeartInsight.org](https://www.heartinsight.org).
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at [heart.org/SupportNetwork](https://www.heart.org/SupportNetwork).

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

Take a few minutes to write down your questions for the next time you see your health care professional.

For example:

**How long do I stay in the hospital?**

**Will I need surgery?**

### MY QUESTIONS:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk for heart disease, manage your condition or care for a loved one. Visit [heart.org/AnswersByHeart](https://www.heart.org/AnswersByHeart) to learn more.