

Angioplasty



CARDIAC HEALTH
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WHAT IS ANGIOPLASTY?

Angioplasty is a procedure to open narrowed or blocked coronary arteries.

Arteries are vessels that carry blood to different areas of the body. Sometimes, fatty deposits called **plaque** build up inside the arteries, slowing or preventing blood flow to the heart. When arteries are blocked, the body's tissues do not get enough oxygen.

Cross-section of an artery showing how balloon angioplasty opens a blockage



Balloon catheter placed in blocked area of artery



Balloon catheter inflated



Catheter removed, blocked area open

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WHAT HAPPENS DURING AN ANGIOPLASTY?

Step #1: You will be taken to the department where angioplasty is performed.

Step #2: You will be asked to change into a hospital gown.

Step #3: An intravenous (IV) line will be placed in one of your veins so that you can receive fluids and medicines during the procedure. You will be continuously monitored.

Step #4: A member of the medical team will visit with you and answer any questions you have. After the discussion, you will be asked to sign an “informed consent” paper.

Step #5: You will be given some local anesthetic so that you will not feel any pain during the procedure. You will only feel some pressure. You will also get medicine to help you relax.

Step #6: A doctor will insert a small hollow flexible tube, called a **catheter**, into your blocked or narrowed artery. The doctor will use an x-ray to help guide the catheter into the blocked area. A dye will be injected and pictures will be taken. Some patients feel a warm or flushed feeling at this time.

Step #7: When the catheter is in the correct area, the doctor will inflate a balloon that is at the end of the catheter. This gently pushes the plaque against the artery, so that more blood can flow through the area. The balloon may need to be inflated and deflated several times.

Step #8: Sometimes, the doctor will insert a device called a **stent** into the artery during angioplasty. A stent is an expandable mesh tube that pushes against the walls of the artery to keep them open.

In most cases, the procedure usually takes one to two hours.

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HOW SHOULD I PREPARE FOR THE PROCEDURE?

Your doctor will give you instructions on how to prepare for your angioplasty.

Here are some of the usual instructions:

- Tell your doctor about all medicines, herbs, and vitamins you are taking.
- Be sure to tell your doctor if you take aspirin or the blood thinner Coumadin (warfarin).
- Tell your doctor if you are allergic to contrast (x-ray dye), iodine, shellfish, or medications.
- Get all required blood tests prior to your procedure.
- Do not eat or drink after midnight on the night before your procedure.
- If you are a smoker, do not smoke for at least 24 hours before your angioplasty.

HOW LONG WILL I NEED TO STAY IN THE HOSPITAL?

The hospital stay after angioplasty ranges from one to three days.

After your angioplasty, your medical team will talk with you about when you can eat and how long you should stay in bed. Most patients have a complete recovery in 7 days or less.

WHAT IF I RECEIVE ANGIOPLASTY AS AN OUTPATIENT?

Sometimes, an overnight hospital stay is not required for angioplasty.

If you are an outpatient, you will stay in the hospital for four to six hours following the procedure. The hospital staff will check that you are doing okay. You will be given fluids to “flush” the dye out of your body. You may also need to stay in bed for 6 hours.

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A friend or family member should drive you home after the procedure.

Your doctor or nurse will give you instructions for follow-up care. Here are some common instructions for angioplasty outpatients:

- Take it easy for 24 hours.
- Eat a proper diet.
- Keep a bandage on the catheter insertion site for a day.
- Don't drive or operate machinery for at least 24 hours.
- Don't exercise or lift heavy things for at least 2 days.
- Don't take a hot bath or shower for at least 12 hours.
- Don't smoke for at least 24 hours.

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IMMEDIATELY IF:



- you start bleeding from the catheter insertion site.
- the catheter insertion site changes color or temperature or becomes numb or painful.
- you have shortness of breath.
- you have discomfort in the chest, face, jaw, or arm.
- you have temperature of 101 degrees or more.

WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS OF ANGIOPLASTY?

Angioplasty is a fairly safe procedure, with few risks. A member of the care team will discuss the risks with you. The most common complication is that the artery might close up again. Sometimes this is due to blood clots. Your

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doctor may suggest an anti-clotting medication for you to take following the procedure.

Angioplasty does not always unblock arteries permanently. You may need to have another procedure or even surgery at a later date.

Your doctor will discuss your angioplasty results and your condition with you.

NOTES: