



Patient & Family Guide  
2021

# Cardiac Catheterization (Dye Test)

Aussi disponible en français : FF85-1120



[www.nshealth.ca](http://www.nshealth.ca)

# Cardiac Catheterization (Dye Test)

This pamphlet will help you learn about having a cardiac catheterization (dye test) and what to expect after going home.

This test is done on inpatients (patients already admitted to the hospital) and outpatients (patients who come to the hospital to have this test done).

## **What is a cardiac catheterization?**

This test shows the arteries that supply your heart muscle with oxygen, and how well your heart muscle and valves are working.

## **How is a cardiac catheterization done?**

- You will be awake during the test. You may be given a mild sedative (medication to help you relax) before the test.
- Small catheters (hollow tubes) will be passed through an artery and/or vein in your groin or wrist. The doctor doing the test will freeze your groin or wrist area so you should not feel any pain. The catheter is passed up to your heart chambers so the pressure in the chambers can be measured.

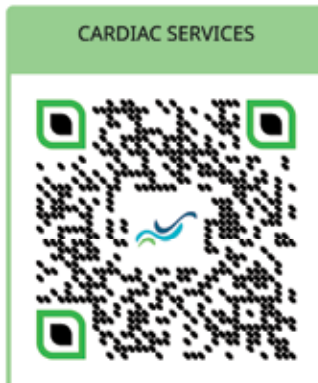
- A special dye is then injected into your heart chambers and arteries. This will let the doctor see if your arteries are blocked. The doctor can also see how well your heart muscle is pumping and if the valves are opening and closing correctly.
- The test takes about 30 minutes to 1 hour.
- After the test, you must rest for several hours. This will take place in your inpatient bed or the area you were in before the test. Your nurse will tell you how long you will need to rest.

**You can watch the dye test video by:**

- › Visiting <https://library.nshealth.ca/Cardiac-Services>

**OR**

- › Scanning the QR code below on your smartphone (open the camera on your smartphone, point the camera at the code, and tap the banner or border that appears):



## **Are there any risks with this test?**

There are some risks with this test. Your doctor will talk about the risks with you. If you have any questions, please ask.

## **How do I get ready for this test?**

### **Before the test:**

- A nurse will measure your height and weight. These measurements help your doctor decide how much dye to use.
- An electrocardiogram (ECG) will be done. A sample of blood may be taken to measure how thin your blood is, or if you have not had blood work done within the last 6 months.
- A nurse will answer any questions you have.
- A doctor will examine you and explain the test to you.
- You will be given an “Information Letter” to read. The doctor will explain the risks of the test and then sign the consent with you.

## **Can I take my usual medications before the test?**

- **If you are an inpatient**, you may take your usual medications on the evening before the test and during the night. Sometimes, certain medications should not be taken on the morning of the test. The team caring for you in hospital will let you know which medications you will continue and if any will not be given before the test.
- **If you are an outpatient**, bring your medications with you to the hospital. Ask the nurse if it is OK to take them before the test.

## **Can I eat and drink before the test?**

You may eat a light breakfast on the morning of your test.

## **I am an outpatient. What will happen on the day of the test?**

- **You must have a responsible adult come to the nursing unit to pick you up, drive you home, and stay with you overnight. Please make these arrangements before you arrive for your test.**

**Note:** The test and recovery usually takes 4 to 5 hours, or sometimes longer.

- You will be settled in your room when it is ready.

## **For outpatients and inpatients, on the day of the test:**

- A nurse will clip an area of hair in each groin and on your right wrist using surgical clippers.
- When it is time for your test, you will be asked to urinate (pee), and put on a hospital gown (johnny shirt). You must remove your underwear and all jewelry. You may wear glasses, dentures, and hearing aids, if needed.
- An intravenous (I.V.) will be started in your arm. You will then be taken to the Cardiac Cath Lab on a stretcher.

## **What can I expect if the test is done through my groin?**

### **How long will I be in bed after the test?**

To give the puncture site time to heal and to prevent bleeding, you will be on complete bedrest for up to 3 hours. This will take place in your inpatient bed or the area you were in before the test.

### **What does complete bedrest mean?**

- You must lie flat on your back.
- **Do not** lift your head from the pillow. You may turn your head from side to side.

- **Do not** put your elbows above your shoulders or your arms behind your head.
- **Do not** cross or bend your legs.
- You may wiggle your toes and flex your feet.
- The head of the bed can be raised 30 degrees.
- Avoid stretching, such as reaching for things on your bedside table.

### **How can I prevent bleeding from the puncture site in my groin?**

- You may have bleeding from the puncture site or blood may stay under your skin in a firm lump. The lump may range in size from a walnut to a golf ball or bigger.
- You can help prevent bleeding by applying gentle pressure over the bandage whenever you laugh, cough, sneeze, pee or poop for the first 48 hours (2 days) after your cardiac catheterization.
- A warm, wet, trickling feeling in your groin area is often a sign of bleeding. Check your bandage for bleeding every 30 minutes for the first few hours after your test.
- Do this by applying light pressure over the bandage with the fingertips of your closest hand. Then bring your hand close to your face (do not lift your head) and check for blood on your fingertips. **If you see blood, do not panic.**

- If you notice bleeding or a lump that is getting bigger while you are in the hospital, apply firm pressure with your hand to the puncture site. Let a nurse know right away by ringing your call bell. If you are not in bed, return to bed immediately if you can. If you think you need help to get back to bed, wait for help.

### **What can I do if I have back pain from lying flat?**

- If your back starts to bother you, tell your nurse. They may be able to help by changing your position. You may also be given pain pills.

### **How will I pee while lying flat on bedrest?**

- You will use a urinal (bottle) or bedpan. If you have trouble with this, please tell your nurse.

### **For the next 48 hours (2 days):**

- Avoid bending, squatting, and heavy lifting (over 10 pounds).
- **Do not** play any sports or go jogging.
- Climb stairs slowly and **do not** walk fast.



## **What can I expect if the test is done through my wrist?**

- Bedrest is not needed. You will be able to get up with help when your sedative has worn off.
- You will have a clear pressure band over the puncture site. The nurse will loosen the pressure band regularly until it can be removed. A clear dressing will be put on after the band is removed. This can be taken off in 24 hours (1 day) and replaced with a bandage (if needed).
- If you see bleeding while the band is on, call your nurse.
- If you see bleeding after the band is off, apply direct pressure and call your nurse.
- Do not put any pressure on the wrist used for the procedure. For example, do not push yourself up out of a chair.
- Expect mild tingling and tenderness in your hand and fingers. Let your nurse know if you feel this.

## **If you have a puncture site in your wrist:**

### **For 1 day after your cardiac catheterization:**

- › **Do not** put direct pressure on the wrist used for your cardiac catheterization. **Do not** push yourself up out of a chair or bed with this arm.

### **For 2 days after your cardiac catheterization:**

- › **Do not** operate a tractor, lawnmower, motorcycle, or ATV.
- › **Do not** lift anything heavier than 1 pound with the wrist used for your cardiac catheterization.
- › **Do not** do any activities where you use or bend your wrist a lot (like golf, painting, or housework).

### **For 3 days after your cardiac catheterization:**

- › **Do not** lift anything heavier than 5 pounds with the wrist used for your cardiac catheterization.

### **For 5 days after your cardiac catheterization:**

- › **Do not** do any vigorous (hard) exercise with the wrist used for your cardiac catheterization (like tennis).

## Care after sedation

You are given medication to help you relax and lower pain during your cardiac catheterization. After sedation, you may be drowsy (tired) and may not remember parts of the test. This is normal. These effects should not last for more than 24 hours.

### **For 24 hours (1 day) after you receive sedation:**

- **Do not** make any important decisions.
- **Do not** sign legal documents or make large purchases.
- **Do not** drink alcohol.
- **Do not** drive.

## **General instructions**

### **When can I eat after my test?**

- While you are on bedrest, you will be offered finger foods (like toast and sandwiches). These are easy to eat while lying flat. Try not to eat too much or too fast to prevent gas and/or stomach pains.
- Drink plenty of fluids. The dye used during the cardiac catheterization can make you dehydrated (not have enough fluids).

### **Medications**

- Some of your medications may be changed or stopped after your cardiac catheterization. Your health care team will talk about this with you after your test.

### **When can I take off the dressing?**

- You can take off the dressing 24 hours after your cardiac catheterization.
- If you have a puncture site (cut where the small catheter was put into your body), you can take off the clear dressing the day after your cardiac catheterization. You may replace it with a bandage.
- Keep the puncture site covered with a bandage until it has healed.

## When can I take a bath?

- **Do not take a bath, swim, or use a sauna or hot tub for 48 hours after your cardiac catheterization.**
- You can shower the morning after your test. Try to keep the dressing dry while showering. **Do not** point the water directly at the puncture site.
- If you are in hospital, there may be a reason you cannot shower the morning after your test. For example, if you are on a cardiac monitor you will not be able to shower

## When can I go home?

- A member of your health care team will tell you when you can expect to be discharged from the hospital and go home.
- **If you are an outpatient, you must have a responsible adult pick you up from the nursing unit and take you home.** They must also stay with you overnight, until the morning after your cardiac catheterization.

## **When can I drive?**

- Ask your cardiologist (heart doctor) when you may drive after your cardiac catheterization. Usually, this is in 24 hours.
- If you were admitted to the hospital for another reason, when you can drive will depend on why you were admitted.

## **Follow-up visit with your cardiologist**

It is important to keep all appointments given to you by your cardiologist and primary health care provider.

# Lifestyle

To keep a healthy lifestyle:

- › Eat low-fat, low-sugar foods.
- › Stop smoking.
- › Increase your activity level. Exercise can help keep your weight down, improve your cholesterol level, and help prevent your arteries from getting clogged.
- › Start walking regularly 48 hours after your cardiac catheterization. Check with your primary health care provider if this is OK for you.
- › Limit alcohol to 2 drinks a day (1 drink = 1 oz of hard liquor, 4 oz of wine, or 12 oz of beer).
- › Take your medication(s) as told by your cardiologist and primary health care provider.
- › Practice relaxing.

## **If bleeding from your groin starts after you go home:**

- If you have bleeding or a lump under your skin after you are discharged, lie on your back and ask someone to help you stop the bleeding:
  - › Have them apply pressure with their hand **about half an inch above the puncture site.**
  - › For bleeding, keep applying pressure until the bleeding stops.
  - › For a lump under your skin, keep applying pressure until the lump gets smaller or softer.
- If the lump does not get smaller or softer after applying pressure for 5 minutes, call your primary health care provider (regular doctor or nurse practitioner).

**If you cannot reach your primary health care provider, and the lump keeps getting bigger, call 911. Do not drive yourself to the hospital.**



## **If bleeding from your wrist starts after you go home:**

- Sit down and apply firm pressure to the puncture site with your fingers for **10 minutes**.
- If the bleeding stops, sit quietly with your wrist straight for **2 hours**. Call your primary health care provider (regular doctor or nurse practitioner).
- If the bleeding does not stop after applying pressure for 10 minutes, or if there is a large amount of bleeding or spurting, **call 911 right away. Do not drive yourself to the hospital.**
- You may have mild tingling and tenderness in your hand and fingers for up to 3 days.

**Contact your primary health care provider right away if you develop severe (very bad) pain in your hand.**

**Call 911 to take you to the nearest  
Emergency Department if you:**

- › are not able to stop the bleeding at the puncture site.
- › have intense (very strong) pain at the puncture site.
- › have severe chest pain or pressure.
- **Do not drive yourself.**

**Call your primary health care provider if you:**

- › have a fever (temperature above  $38.5^{\circ}\text{C}/101.3^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) or chills.
- › see pus at the puncture site.
- › notice a firm lump at the puncture site that does not get smaller or softer after applying pressure for 5 minutes.

**If you cannot reach your primary health care provider, go to the nearest Emergency Department.**

## Notes:

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**What are your questions?  
Please ask. We are here to help you.**

This pamphlet is for educational purposes only. It is not intended to replace the advice or professional judgment of a health care provider. The information may not apply to all situations. If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here:  
<https://library.nshealth.ca/Patients-Guides>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

*Prepared by:* Cardiology Services, QE II  
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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.