Cardiac Catheterization

(Dye Test)
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What is a cardiac catheterization?
This test shows how well your heart muscle and valves, and the arteries that supply the heart muscle with oxygen are working.

How is a cardiac catheterization done?
• You will be awake during the test. You will be given a mild sedative (medication to help you relax) before the test.
• The doctor will freeze your groin OR wrist area so you should feel no pain. Your doctor will decide which option is best for you.
• Small catheters (hollow tubes) will be passed through an artery and/or vein in your groin or wrist. They are passed up to the heart chambers where the pressure in the heart chamber is measured.
• A special dye is then injected into the heart chambers and arteries. This will tell the doctors how well the heart muscle is pumping and if the valves are opening and closing correctly. The doctor can also see if the arteries are blocked.
• The test takes about 30 minutes to 1 hour.
Are there any risks with this test?
There are some risks with this test. Your doctor will talk about these with you.

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 for your test.
• An electrocardiogram (EKG) will be done. Sometimes a sample of blood will be taken to measure how thin your blood is, or if you haven’t had any recent 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 medicines before the test?
You may take your usual medicines on the evening before the test and during the night. Sometimes, certain medicines should not be taken on the morning of the test. Bring your medications with you and ask the nurse if it is OK to take them.
Can I eat and drink before the test?
You may eat a light breakfast on the morning of your test.

Day of the test on Nursing Unit 6.1, Cardiology Day Unit (CDU)

You will be given sedation before your test. You will need a responsible adult to come to the unit to pick you up, drive you home, and stay with you overnight when you are discharged. Please make arrangements before you arrive for your test. Please be advised you may be here most of the day (4-5 hours, sometimes longer), depending on what time your test is complete.

What will happen when I arrive on the nursing unit?

• You will be settled in your room when it is ready. A nurse will clip a small area of hair in each groin using surgical clippers.

• When it is time for your test, you will be asked to empty your bladder (pee), and put on a ‘Johnny shirt.’ You must remove your underwear and all jewelry. You may wear glasses, dentures, and hearing aids.

• An intravenous (IV) will be started in your arm. You will then be taken to the Cardiac Cath Lab on a stretcher.
What can I expect if my procedure is done through my groin?

How long will I be in bed after my test?

To give the puncture site time to heal and to prevent bleeding, you will be on complete bedrest for up to 3 hours.

Remember:

- 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 activities, such as reaching for things on your bedside table.

How can I prevent bleeding from the puncture site?

You can help prevent bleeding by applying firm pressure over the bandage whenever you laugh, cough, sneeze, or pass your urine (pee).

A warm, wet, trickling feeling in your groin area is often a sign of bleeding. You can help your nurse by checking your bandage every 30 minutes.
Do this by applying light pressure over the bandage with the fingertips of your closest hand.

Next, bring that hand close to your face (don’t lift your head) and check for blood on your fingertips. **If you see blood, do not panic.** Put the same hand back down over the bandage and apply firm pressure.

Using your other hand, ring for your nurse right away. If you feel a lump under the bandage but do not see any blood, ring for your nurse right away.

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

While you are on bedrest, you will be offered finger foods (such as toast and sandwiches). These are easy to eat while lying flat. Do not limit your fluids as the dye used during your test has a drying effect. To prevent gas and stomach pains try not to eat too much or too fast.

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

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

**How will I pass my urine while on bedrest?**

You will use a urinal (bottle) or bedpan. If you have trouble with this, please talk to your nurse.
Can family and friends visit after my test?
Family members and friends may be with you before your test and during your bedrest period. They may be asked to leave the room during nursing care.

What can I expect if my procedure is done through my wrist?
• Bedrest is not needed. You will be able to get up 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 and replaced with a Band-Aid®.

• If you see any bleeding, apply direct pressure and call your nurse.

• Do not put any pressure on the wrist used for your procedure. For example, do not push yourself up out of a chair.

• Expect mild tingling and tenderness in your hand and fingers. Ask the nurse for pain medicine, if needed.
Who do I talk to if I have questions?
Please talk to your nurse if you have any questions, discomfort, or doubts.
Your nurse will give you a pamphlet called *Going Home After Your Cardiac Catheterization* for more information.