

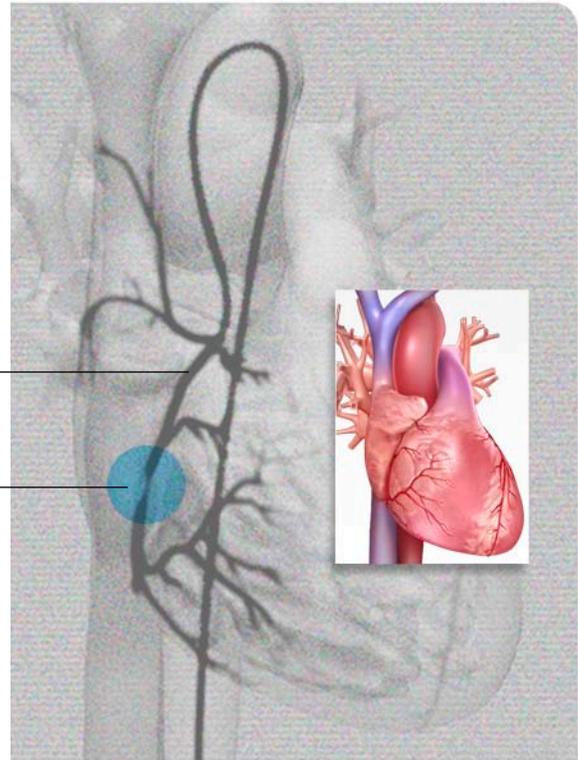


What Is a Coronary Angiogram?

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 flow of blood to your heart. If a blood clot forms and blocks blood flow through that artery, a heart attack may occur.

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

Narrowing of right coronary artery



Why do I need this test?

A coronary angiogram is a special X-ray test. It's done to find out if your coronary arteries are blocked or narrowed, where and by how much. An angiogram can help your doctor see if you need treatment such as angioplasty or stent, coronary artery bypass surgery (CABG) or medical therapy.

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

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

What happens during an angiogram?

- You may be given medicine to relax you, but you will stay awake.

- You go to the hospital's heart catheterization laboratory ("cath lab").
- You lie on a 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.
- 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 images, 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.

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

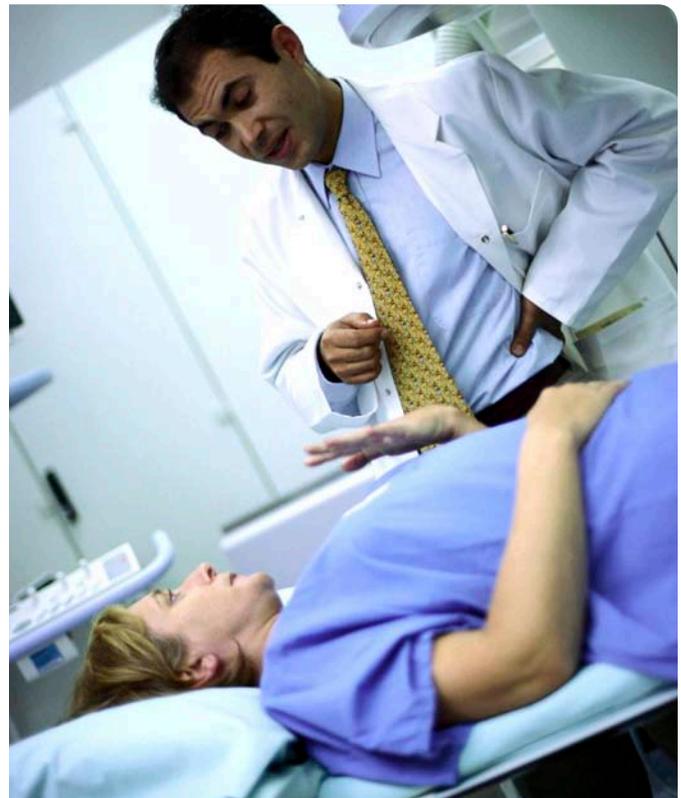
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- Rarely, nausea
- If a picture of the heart's main pumping chamber is taken (and it's taken during about 2/3 of angiograms), you'll feel a hot flash sensation from head to toe that will last for 20 seconds as the special fluid is injected.
- During 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 won't 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.



After your angiogram, your doctor 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** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

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, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.