

What is coronary angiography?

A coronary angiogram is a diagnostic test performed in hospital that uses x-ray imaging to view your heart's blood vessels and blood flow. It allows your cardiologist to determine if your arteries are narrowed and if blood flow is affected. The results from the test help determine if any treatment is needed which can often be done during the same procedure. For example, a narrowing artery can be treated with a balloon (**angioplasty**) or stent (**stenting**) to open the artery and improve blood flow.

Your cardiologist may recommend a coronary angiogram (and the associated treatments) only after other non-invasive tests have been performed in our clinic. This may include an echocardiogram and exercise stress echocardiogram.

What does it involve?

A hospital procedure

A coronary angiogram is performed in hospital and may involve an overnight stay depending on your situation and treatment required (eg angioplasty and/or stenting).

During the procedure, a flexible tube called a catheter is inserted into an artery at the wrist or groin. It is gently guided through the artery to your heart. Dye (called contrast) is injected via the catheter into your heart's vessels, making the blood flow easy to see on the x-ray images taken. Your cardiologist will be able to see how well your blood is flowing and identify any blockages.

Angioplasty and stenting

If a narrowed blood vessel is identified during the angiogram, your cardiologist may perform angioplasty and/or stenting at the same time.

During angioplasty, a temporary balloon is inserted and inflated to open up the blocked blood vessel. A permanent stent (small wire mesh tube) may also be inserted to prop the blood vessel open and reduce the chance of it narrowing again. Both balloons and stents are guided to the heart via the catheter. Once the procedure is complete, the catheter is removed and the insertion site (groin or wrist) is closed and dressed.

What you can expect

As your doctor and medical team need to communicate with you during the procedure, it is generally performed while you are awake. To ensure that you are comfortable and relaxed, an intravenous drip will be attached to your arm to administer sedatives, pain relief and other medications. This will help you to feel very sleepy and relaxed but able to follow instructions. You will be lying down on your back and at different times, the x-ray machine will move above and around your chest area to take images. Your heartbeat and blood pressure will be monitored and further medication may be administered via the intravenous drip if needed.

After the procedure, you will be moved to a recovery ward for monitoring. Most patients can return home the day after the procedure. Your cardiologist will advise if any driving or other restrictions apply.

Coronary angiography, angioplasty and stenting

General information



What can I expect after the procedure?

Once you have returned home, you may feel tired for a few days but can generally return to normal activities as you recover. You may also feel mild discomfort at the site of insertion which can usually be relieved with simple painkillers such as paracetamol. Your cardiologist will advise which painkillers and other medications you may use.

You can shower but try to keep the wound dry and clean for one week. If you experience any signs of infection (such as fever, swelling, redness, oozing from the wound), or cardiac disturbances (such as breathlessness, chest pain or palpitations) please contact our clinic.

About one to two weeks after the procedure, your cardiologist will check your heart and wound at a follow-up appointment at our clinic. An echocardiogram (ultrasound of your heart) may also be done at this time.

Do I need to prepare?

- You may need to stop certain medications prior to the procedure. Your cardiologist will advise if this applies to you.
- You will need to fast for a few hours prior to your procedure. A hospital representative will call you the day before and advise from what time you need to stop eating/drinking.
- If you are expected to need certain medications during the procedure, driving restrictions may apply. Your cardiologist will let you know if this is the case.

Are there any risks associated with these procedures?

Your cardiologist will discuss the potential risks, which include:

- Stroke
- Heart attack
- Irregular heart rhythms
- Damage to the catheterised artery
- Allergic reactions to dye/ medications
- Kidney damage
- Bruising, bleeding and infection

What will I need to pay?

As angiography, angioplasty and stenting are hospital procedures, your out-of-pocket costs will depend on whether you are admitted as a private or public patient. If you have private health insurance and have the procedure done at a private hospital, your health fund will generally cover a portion of the cost. Our patient services team can provide you with an estimate.

If you are admitted as a public patient to a public hospital, your costs will be covered by Medicare, however you may need to wait longer to have the procedure performed.

Any questions or concerns?

Please call us: Chatswood clinic: (02) 9411 3930 Dee Why clinic: (02) 9133 7050