

Cardiac Catheterization Lab Procedures: After-Hospital Care

The following information will help you recover after your cardiac catheterization. Be sure to follow all instructions.

Activity

You may have bleeding or swelling while the wound is healing. This is due to the stress or strain to the puncture site or surrounding muscles. Carefully follow these guidelines:

- Limit your activity on the day you are discharged.
- Do not drive for 24 hours.
- Do not shower until the next day.
- Do not take tub baths for 1 week.
- Climb stairs (as needed) with a slow, steady pace for the first 2 days.
- Avoid sexual activity for 1 week.

You may resume your standard activities the day after discharge. This includes social activities. Do not do strenuous physical exercise for 1 week (such as tennis, running, swimming, golfing, weightlifting and bicycling).

- If the puncture site was in your groin:
 - Do not lift anything heavier than 10 pounds for 1 week.
- If the puncture site was in your wrist:
 - Do not bend your wrist for 24 hours.
 - Do not soak the puncture site for 3 days (in a bathtub or sink).
 - Do not lift more than 3 to 5 pounds with your affected arm for 1 week.
- If the puncture site was in your armpit or antecubital (elbow pit of your arm):
 - Use the arm sling for the first 24 hours.
 - Do not raise your arm above your shoulder for 1 week.
 - Do not lift more than 3 to 5 pounds with your affected arm for 1 week.
- If the puncture was in your neck:
 - Do not lift more than 10 pounds for 3 days.

Fluids

- Drink at least 6 glasses of water (8 ounces each) over the next 24 hours unless your healthcare provider tells you otherwise. Water helps to clear the “dye” used during the procedure from your body.

Medications

Please review the medications listed on your After Visit Summary that your discharging nurse gave you. Depending on the results of your procedure, your physician may prescribe new medications. Please make sure you understand what medications you should take and how often to take them.

If you usually take a blood-thinning medication, your healthcare provider will tell you when you can start taking it again.

Wound care and healing

There will be a bandage over the wound site. The day after the procedure you may remove the bandage with soap and water. Do not put on a new bandage.

Keep the site clean and dry. Do not use any lotions, ointments or powders at the wound site for 1 week.

The wound should be soft and dry while it is healing. There may be a bruise (black and blue mark) or a marble-sized lump.

Warning signs and symptoms

Chest pain and other symptoms

Please call your physician **right away** if you have these symptoms:

- Angina (chest pain or discomfort) that spreads to your neck, jaw or arm
- New symptoms or a change in your angina pattern
- Nausea or heavy sweating
- Shortness of breath with exertion
- An irregular heartbeat
- Lightheadedness or dizziness that makes you lie down
- A fainting spell
- Calf tenderness or pain
- Swelling of your ankle or foot

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department if you have:

- Chest discomfort or pain lasting longer than 10 minutes that does not go away after you take 1 nitroglycerin tablet under your tongue
- Frequent, recurring episodes of chest discomfort or pain

Wound changes

Please call your physician if you have any of these symptoms:

- Redness, swelling or color changes around the wound
- Drainage from the wound
- A lump at the wound site that gets bigger or is larger than the size of a marble

- Numbness, tingling or coolness in the area around the wound, as well as your:
 - Thigh or leg
 - Wrist or arm
 - Neck

- Pain at the wound site that makes it hard to:
 - Walk
 - Use your hand or arm for light, non-strenuous activities
 - Turn your head

Minor bleeding (from the vein)

If you have minor bleeding or oozing from the puncture wound:

- Lie flat right away if the wound is in your groin.
- Apply firm pressure just above the puncture site and hold it for 15 minutes. Use a clean cloth or tissue to apply pressure. If possible, have another person apply the pressure.
- Remove the pressure after 15 minutes. The wound should be dry and flat, without bleeding. If the wound is in your groin, continue to lie flat for about 1 hour before getting up and walking.
- Cover the wound with a bandage.
- Call your physician to let them know you had bleeding from the wound.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department if you have:

- Minor bleeding lasts for more than 15 minutes.
- Swelling that seems to be increasing.

Bleeding from the artery

This can happen when the artery (blood vessel) used during the procedure has re-opened. Although rare, it is an emergency. **You need medical attention right away.**

- If the puncture is in your groin, lie flat right away and apply firm pressure to stop the bleeding.
- If the puncture is in your wrist or antecubital, press firmly on the site with your thumb while supporting your wrist or elbow with your other fingers.
- If the puncture is in your armpit, apply firm pressure to stop the bleeding and hug your arm to the side of your chest.

Call 911 or go to the nearest emergency department if you have:

- Swelling around the wound that quickly increases or is pulsating.
- A lot of blood or a jet of blood pumping out of the puncture site.

These symptoms may occur suddenly.

Follow-up appointments

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns, please call the Cardiac Catheterization Lab.

- During regular business hours (8 am to 5 pm, Monday through Friday), call 312.926.2284 (312.926.CATH), extension 3 (TTY: 711).
- After hours and on the weekends, call 312.926.2284 and ask for the Cardiac Catheterization Lab physician on call.