

## Information For Patients

# Cardiac Catheterisation

(A test to examine the arteries that supply blood to the heart)



Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Trust  
Thomas Drive  
Liverpool  
Merseyside  
L14 3PE  
Telephone: 0151-228 1616  
[www.lhch.nhs.uk](http://www.lhch.nhs.uk)

**This leaflet has been written to provide information about a test to examine the arteries that supply blood to the heart (Cardiac Catheterisation). We hope it answers some of the questions or concerns you may have about the test. It is not intended to replace talking with medical or nursing staff.**

### **What is Cardiac Catheterisation?**

Cardiac Catheterisation (also known as coronary angiogram) is a specialised test that allows a doctor to examine the arteries that supply blood to the heart. It also gives vital information about the blood pressure inside your heart, the pumping chambers and heart valves.

### **How is the test done**

The test is usually done through blood vessels in the groin or wrist. You will be awake during the test but you will be given a local anesthetic to numb the skin. A small cut is made either in your wrist or your groin. A thin tube (called a catheter) and fine wires are inserted into the artery and passed up through the blood vessel to the heart. A special type of dye that can be seen on x-ray is injected through the tube to enable the doctor to examine the coronary arteries and the heart. This may cause a warm sensation, which is nothing to worry about.

### **Will I have any pain during the test?**

You will not feel the catheter moving around inside your chest but you may be aware of an occasional missed or extra heartbeat. If you experience any chest pain you must inform the staff.

### **How long does the test take?**

The test usually takes about half an hour. It does involve being admitted to hospital, normally as a day case. Your doctor will discuss the results of the test with you before you go home.

### **What preparation is required?**

Before you come into hospital it is helpful if you shave each side of your groin (the crease at the top of each leg) and your right wrist. You will also need to have a bath or a shower. You will be informed when to stop eating prior to the test.

### **What are the benefits of having the test?**

Cardiac catheterisation may have been recommended if you have recently had a heart attack, if you have angina or symptoms which could be angina.

It is not a treatment for these conditions but will provide important information about your heart. This will allow your doctor to decide if you need any further treatment and to discuss any treatment options with you and your family.

### **What alternatives do I have?**

This depends on your condition. Other possible investigations include an exercise test and scans of the heart. There is no other test however that can look inside the coronary arteries or allow your doctor to examine your heart in the same way. Your doctor would be happy to discuss any alternative investigations if they are applicable to your particular case.

### **What are the risks involved?**

The test is performed in large numbers at this hospital and is usually very safe.

Some of the general risks associated with the test are outlined below; individual patients however may have a greater risk of some or all of the complications.

Your individual risks will be discussed with you in more detail before you sign a consent form.

- Bleeding or bruising can occur at the place where the tubes are inserted in your arm or groin.

More serious but rare complications include;

- Damaging the arteries, causing them to narrow or block suddenly. This could cause a heart attack and may require treatment with an emergency bypass operation.
- Having a stroke during the procedure

## What can I expect after the test?

After the test you will be taken back to the ward. If the test was done through your groin you will need to rest in bed with your leg flat for a minimum of two hours. If it was done through your wrist you may be able to sit in a chair. You will be able to eat and drink unless you require further tests. The nurse looking after you will check your pulse, blood pressure and observe the puncture site at regular intervals.

## When can I resume normal activities?

You will normally be able to go home later the same day. You will not be able to drive on the day of the test and you should rest for the remainder of the day. You may resume normal activities the following day although you must not lift heavy objects for one week. This advice will be discussed with you before you go home and you will be given an advice sheet.

## For further information visit:

[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

[www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)

[www.dipex.org](http://www.dipex.org)

## Or contact:

The British Heart Foundation Heart Information Line on 0845 070 8070.

If you require a copy of this leaflet in any other language or format please contact us quoting the leaflet code and the language you require.

CTPALS001

Publication date October 07

Review October 09

© Liverpool Heart and Chest Hospital NHS Trust