After Your Heart Angiogram: Femoral Artery Approach

Information for patients and families

Read this booklet to learn:

• what activities you can do when you get home
• how to care for your puncture site
• what problems to look out for
• how to manage chest pain

What kinds of activities can I do when I get home?

You had a catheter (small tube) put into an artery in your groin during your angiogram. When you return home don’t do any tiring activities for 1 week. This will allow your groin puncture site to heal.

• Walk slowly for the first 3 to 4 days after your angiogram. Stop if you get angina (chest pain) or short of breath.
• Climb stairs slowly for the first few days. Organize your activities so you don’t have to go up and down the stairs many times.
• Don’t lift anything over 10 pounds. For example, don’t lift groceries, children, or small pets.
• Don’t do tiring exercise like aerobics or weight lifting.
• Only have showers for the first 7 days after your angiogram. Sitting in a hot bath could cause your puncture site to bleed.

Take Tylenol (acetaminophen) for any groin pain you may feel.
**When can I drive?**

You can drive your car 1 day after your angiogram. If you drive a commercial vehicle (truck or tractor), ask your doctor when you can start driving again.

If you had a heart attack before your angioplasty, you may have to wait up to 4 weeks. Your doctor will tell you when you can drive again.

If you are driving for a long time, remember to stretch your legs every hour.

**When can I travel by air?**

Talk to your cardiologist before you schedule your flight. Your health condition may prevent you from flying.

**When can I go back to work?**

When you can go back to work depends on the kind of work that you do. Ask your doctor, and they will let you know.

**What about sex?**

Wait 2 days after your angiogram before you have sex.

**How do I care for the area on my groin where the catheter went in (puncture site)?**

1. Take the dressing (covering) off your groin the morning after you return home.
2. Put a Band-Aid over your puncture site and keep it on for 24 hours.
3. After 24 hours, take the Band-Aid off and leave the puncture site open to the air. This will help it to heal.
You may have a small lump at your puncture site. You may also have some bruising. This is normal. The lump will go away in about 2 to 4 weeks. The bruising will disappear in about 1 week.

Problems with the puncture site are rare. Call your doctor if you have any questions.

Call your doctor or go to the nearest emergency department right away if:

- **your puncture site starts to bleed**  
  Lie down. Press firmly on your puncture site until the bleeding stops. Call for help and have someone drive you to the nearest hospital emergency department.

- **your temperature rises above 38°Celsius or 101°Fahrenheit and you feel chills**

- **your puncture site becomes red or has pus (yellowish liquid) coming out of it**

- **you have sudden shortness of breath**

- **your puncture site, lower abdomen (stomach area) or pelvic area is swollen or very painful**

- **your leg is:**
  - very painful
  - cold or turns blue
  - red and swollen
How do I manage any chest pain?

If you have a prescription for nitroglycerine (nitro), always carry it with you.
If you have angina (chest pain):
   1. Take your nitro and wait 5 minutes.
   2. If you still have chest pain, take a second nitro and wait 5 minutes.
   3. If you still have chest pain, take a third nitro and wait 5 minutes.

If your chest pain does not go away in 15 minutes after 3 sprays or pills of nitro, go to the nearest hospital emergency department or call 911. Don’t drive yourself to the hospital.