

After Your Angioplasty or Angiogram: Radial Artery Approach

Discharge instructions for patients and families

You had a catheter (small tube) put into an artery in your wrist during your procedure.

Read this booklet to learn:

- what activities you can do at home
- how to care for your puncture site
- how to manage chest pain
- what problems to look for
- when you will have a follow-up





What activities can I do when I get home?

When you get home, be careful with your wrist, where you had the catheter (tube) put in.

- Rest with your forearm and hand supported on a pillow.
- **Don't** bend your wrist for 8 hours after your procedure.
- **Don't** use your wrist for 1 day after you come home. For example, don't work on a computer, knit or twist your wrist.
- **Don't** lift anything over 10 pounds (5 kilograms) for the first 2 days. For example, don't lift young children, grocery bags or small pets.
- Climb stairs slowly. Organize your activities so you don't have to go up and down the stairs too often.
- **Only have showers for the first 7 days after your procedure.** Sitting in a hot bath could cause your puncture site to bleed.
- Take acetaminophen (Tylenol®) if you have any pain in your wrist.



When can I drive?

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.

- You can drive an **automatic car** 1 day after you return home.
- You can drive a **standard shift car** after 2 days.
- If you drive a **commercial vehicle** (a truck or tractor), ask your doctor when you can start driving 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 when you can go back to work.



What about sex?

Wait 2 days after your procedure before you have sex again.

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

1. Take the dressing (covering) from your puncture site 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 the healing process.

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.

How do I manage any chest pain?

If a stent was placed, it is common to have some chest pain or discomfort similar to angina in the first few days or weeks after your procedure. This pain is usually caused by spasms or stretching of your artery during the angioplasty. It will get better with no treatment.

If you start to feel chest pain that is the same as the angina (less blood flow to your heart) that you had before your procedure, then you need to take nitroglycerine (nitro).

Please follow these instructions:

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 (angina) 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.**

If your angina continues and is happening more often, contact your cardiologist.

When will I have a follow-up appointment?

Follow up with your cardiologist or family doctor about an appointment after your angioplasty or angiogram.



Go to the nearest emergency department right away if:

- **You see the lump at your puncture site pulsating (beating).**
Cover it loosely with a bandage. Don't press on the lump. The lump may be pulsating because there is a problem in the wall of your artery.
- **Your puncture site starts to bleed.**
Press firmly on your puncture site until the bleeding stops. If bleeding stops (minor bleed), you do not need to go to the emergency department. If the bleeding continues, call for help and have someone drive you to the nearest hospital emergency department.
- **You have sudden shortness of breath.**
- **Your wrist, hand or arm:**
 - feels very painful
 - gets cold or turns blue
 - loses feeling (goes numb)
 - is swollen

If you don't have someone to drive you to the hospital, **call 911 for an ambulance.**

Leave the front door open so the paramedics can enter your home.



Call your doctor and ask to have an appointment that day if:

- your temperature rises above 38 °C or 101 °F and you feel chills
- your puncture site becomes red, swells up or has pus (yellowish liquid) coming out of it

These may be signs of infection.

If you can't get an appointment with your doctor that day, go to the nearest emergency department.



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