

Department of Cardiology

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Coronary Angiogram

Patient Information leaflet

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Produced by Department of Cardiology

This leaflet can be made available in alternative languages/formats on request

**Whiston Hospital
Warrington Road
Prescot L35 5DR**

Reasons for the procedure

The main purpose of a coronary angiogram is to obtain important information about:

- Any narrowing of the heart arteries
- The blood pressure within the heart
- The function of the pumping chambers and the valves

Benefits of the procedure

The information obtained from your coronary angiogram will allow a diagnosis to be made and treatment started (if needed.)

How long does the procedure take?

It is usually performed as a day case. The actual procedure takes approximately 20-60 minutes. You will be admitted to hospital on the morning of the procedure and should be discharged later the same day. Occasionally it may be necessary for you to remain in hospital overnight.

Where does the procedure take place?

You will need to report to **Whiston** Hospital, at the **Cardiac Diagnostic Centre** on the day of your appointment. The procedure itself takes place in a fully equipped X-ray room. Following your angiogram you will be moved to a ward area within the diagnostic centre to recover until you are discharged.

How will I be prepared for the procedure?

On the day of the procedure you may:

- Have an ECG recorded
- Have your blood pressure, pulse and temperature checked
- Be asked to wear a hospital gown and paper underwear
- Be given a mild sedative to help you relax

Nature of the procedure

An injection of local anaesthetic will be given into the skin in the groin, wrist or elbow - this may sting a little. A cardiac catheter, (a long thin flexible tube about the width of the lead in a pencil), is inserted into a blood vessel at this area and pushed along until it reaches the heart. X-ray pictures are then taken whilst a liquid is injected. The X-ray pictures confirm the position of the catheter and provide information about the heart, and if there is any narrowing in the blood vessels in the heart (coronary arteries).

Discomforts of the procedure

- You may experience a pushing sensation.
- You may be aware of a hot flushing feeling and an odd taste.
- During certain investigations you may feel that you are passing urine but this is only a feeling. The staff will warn you when this is about to happen.

Contact your GP, cardiac diagnostic centre or NHS direct if any of the following occur:

- Fever
- If you have a lump or a tender swelling
- The site becomes red/warm to the touch or appearance of a rash
- Numbness or pain in the affected limb.
- Any leaking from the wound area other than bleeding
- Severe back or abdominal pain.

Please find your individual instructions below:

Before your angiogram

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Following your angiogram

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- **Do not lift** anything for 24 hrs and avoid heavy lifting for 3 days.
- **If you are diabetic and take Metformin, Do not take for 48 hours after discharge.**
- Following your angiogram **do not drive for 24 hrs** or for 1 month after a heart attack.
- **Do not drink any alcohol for 24 hrs** and drink plenty of clear fluids on returning home.

Bleeding

- It is rare to have severe bleeding from the insertion site once you are at home.
- Severe bleeding can look alarming, but you can control it whilst waiting for help
- If the artery is bleeding you will see spurts of blood that will be bright red in colour.

Should this occur you must:

- **Lie flat**
- **Apply direct pressure to the puncture site**
- **Ask someone to call 999**
- Internal bleeding from the artery is also rare. If this occurs you may feel light headed. The area around the puncture site will become very swollen and very painful.

If this happens call 999 and state that you have had a cardiac catheter

- **You may also experience some brief chest discomfort. This does not mean that something is wrong but you should inform the staff if this occurs.**

Risks of the procedure

Complications are rare. The most common complication is mild bruising at the catheter insertion site. This is usually painless and clears completely within 1-2 weeks. Very occasionally this bruising is more severe and uncomfortable but should still clear quickly.

Very rarely (less than 1 in 1000) the blood vessel may be damaged and will require an operation to repair it.

Damage by the catheter to the heart's blood vessels may cause a severe angina attack or a heart attack but again this is very rare (2 in 1000).

Similarly allergic reactions to the X-ray liquid are very rare (less than 1 in 1000) and these settle quickly with medication.

Other rare complications include an irregular heart beat (3 in 1000), a stroke (1 in 1000) or death (1 in 1000).

Please be reassured that the test would not be recommended unless the benefits outweigh the risks

Alternatives to the procedure

This test is considered to be the 'gold standard' of investigations. Other tests available may provide a diagnosis, but they are not as accurate as an angiogram and do not provide as much information.

Consequences of not having the procedure

It may be more difficult to diagnose your heart condition without the information which is provided by the angiogram. You may prevent yourself from having potentially beneficial treatment.

What happens after the procedure?

After the procedure the catheter will be removed and pressure applied for about 10-20 minutes over the punctured blood vessel. If a blood vessel in the groin was used you will be asked to lie flat in bed for a minimum of 2 and a half hours. This is to reduce the risk of bleeding.

You may eat and drink as normal on return to the ward. Once you are fully recovered you will be allowed home. You will need someone to collect you from the hospital and it is **essential that someone stays with you for the first 24 hours. If this is not possible you must inform the nurse as soon as possible.**

Preparation for your angiogram

On the day of your angiogram:

- Please continue to take your medications as usual, unless advised otherwise by our nursing staff.

Please remember:

- To bring your medications with you in their boxes
- To bring slippers and a dressing gown
- To wear flat shoes and loose fitting clothing
- Do **NOT** bring any jewellery, money or other valuables with you. A wedding ring is allowed.

Instructions following your angiogram

What to do on returning home

- Please make sure you have someone staying with you for 24 hrs after discharge.
- Have a quiet evening, resting the affected limb.
- You may sleep in your usual position at night time.
- Avoid a bath for 3 days. If the angiogram was carried out from your wrist you may bathe the day after the procedure, but **do not** soak your affected arm.
- You may shower the day after the procedure but avoid direct spray of water onto the site.
- Remove your dressing after 24 hrs, and gently wash and dry the area. Cover with a plaster for 3-4 days.