

WHAT IS CORONARY ANGIOPLASTY?

TRANSCRIPT

"I got up in the morning and went outside to move the car out of the garage, and suddenly started to have what I thought was respiratory problem. It was very hot weather. I came in and said to my wife, 'I'm going to lie down on the bed for a minute.' And she said, at that point, 'Maybe I'd better take you to the doctor.' I said, 'No. I think you'd better call the ambulance.'"

Like this patient, your doctor has recommended that you have a procedure called coronary angioplasty. To help you understand this procedure, we'll begin by looking at the heart and how it works.

The heart is a muscle that continuously pumps blood throughout the body. To do its job, the heart needs oxygen and nutrients. These are supplied by large blood vessels, called coronary arteries.

The arteries and their branches wrap around the surface of the heart. Blood flows easily through a healthy artery.

But over time, fatty deposits called plaque can build up in the artery wall. This narrowing of the artery is called atherosclerosis.

The artery can become partially blocked, reducing the flow of blood to the heart. Reduced blood flow can cause chest discomfort, especially during physical activity, when your heart is beating harder and needs even more oxygen-rich blood. The pressure or tightness you feel is called angina pectoris. It's a warning sign that you may be at risk for a heart attack.

An angioplasty procedure can eliminate the blockage and open the artery, increasing blood flow and reducing your symptoms. If you have any questions about coronary angioplasty and the benefits to you, talk to your healthcare provider.