

# Coronary Angioplasty: Before Your Procedure

Coronary arteries help the heart by supplying it with oxygen-rich blood. Coronary artery disease, also called heart disease, happens when cholesterol and fats build up in your coronary arteries.

This buildup is called plaque. It can limit blood flow to the heart muscle. This can lead to symptoms such as chest pain or pressure. Angioplasty is a procedure to open narrowed or blocked arteries.

This helps blood flow to the heart muscle, so you have less pain and can be more active. Before your angioplasty, you may get medicine that relaxes you or puts you in a light sleep. The doctor will not make any cuts to do the procedure.

Instead, the doctor makes a small poke—in a blood vessel in your arm or groin, on the upper thigh—and puts a thin tube called a catheter into the blood vessel. To guide the catheter, your doctor looks at pictures of your heart using an X-ray.

The doctor moves the catheter to the narrowed part of the artery. Next the doctor inflates a tiny balloon to open the artery. Then the balloon is deflated and removed. The pressure from the inflated balloon makes more room for the blood to flow.

The doctor usually places a stent in the artery to keep it open after the balloon is removed. This helps blood and oxygen flow more normally into the heart muscle. When finished, your doctor removes the catheter. You'll stay in a recovery room for a few hours.

This is to make sure the catheter site has healed enough to stop any bleeding. The nurse may use something like a weighted bag to put pressure on the catheter site to keep it from bleeding.

Before the procedure, tell your doctor about all the medicines and natural health products you take, especially blood thinners, like aspirin. Some can raise the risk of bleeding or cause problems with anesthesia. Your doctor will tell you which medicines to take or stop before the procedure.

And follow your doctor's directions for preparing for your procedure, including when you should stop eating and drinking. Bring your photo ID, insurance card, and any paperwork your hospital may have asked for.

Angioplasty can help you feel better and manage your symptoms. But, remember, angioplasty doesn't cure your heart disease. The good news is that any steps you take to care for your heart can help you manage your symptoms or prevent a future heart attack.

Having angioplasty may be stressful. But knowing what to expect and how to prepare can help. And if you have any questions or concerns, you can always call your doctor.