

Angioplasty for Peripheral Artery Disease: Before Your Procedure

Your arteries are the blood vessels that carry oxygen-rich blood to the muscle and tissue in your body.

It's a really important job.

But if you have peripheral artery disease—or PAD—cholesterol and fats build up in the arteries in your pelvis and legs.

This buildup is called plaque.

And it can limit blood flow in the arteries.

This can cause pain when you walk or exercise and make it harder for your body to heal.

Angioplasty is a procedure to open narrowed or blocked arteries.

This helps blood flow more normally to your leg muscles so that you can be more active. You may also have less pain.

Before the procedure, you may get some medicine that will help you relax and keep you from feeling any pain.

The doctor makes a small poke in a blood vessel— usually in your groin or on the upper thigh—and puts a thin tube called a catheter into the blood vessel.

As the doctor puts the catheter in and moves it through your blood vessel, you may feel a little pressure. But it won't hurt.

The doctor uses a special dye and a camera to watch the movement of the catheter in the blood vessel on an X-ray screen.

The doctor moves the catheter to the narrowed part of the artery. They inflate a tiny balloon to widen the artery.

Then the balloon is deflated and removed.

This creates more room for blood to flow.

The doctor may use the balloon to place a stent in the artery.

A stent is an expandable tube that opens as the balloon is inflated.

The stent stays in the artery to keep it open.

The doctor then removes the balloon and catheter.

If the catheter was put in your groin, you will need to lie still and keep your leg straight for up to a few hours in a recovery room.

Pressure may be put on the catheter insertion site to make sure it has healed enough to stop any bleeding.

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Before the procedure, tell your doctor about all the medicines and natural health products you take, especially blood thinners.

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, health 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 PAD.

It's still important to have a healthy lifestyle and take medicines to help lower your risk of heart attack and stroke.

And if you have any questions or concerns, you can always call your doctor.