

Pulmonary Artery Catheterization (PAC)

Overview

You may need a pulmonary artery catheter to see how well your heart and lungs are working. It is often used for people in intensive care. It can help patients with heart issues, severe burns, organ failure or other serious problems.

Inserting the Catheter

Before your catheter is placed, an injection numbs your skin. Then, the doctor puts a needle in a large vein in your neck. The catheter is placed through this needle. It is pushed down through the vein to your heart. The doctor may use a video x-ray device called a "fluoroscope" to help guide it.

Positioning

Once it's in your heart, the doctor inflates a small balloon at the catheter's tip. The catheter is pushed through the heart's right atrium, through the right ventricle, and into the pulmonary artery. Then, the balloon is deflated.

Monitoring

The catheter measures your blood's temperature, pressure and oxygen levels. Fluids or medicine can be given to you through the catheter. If you need long-term monitoring, your catheter will be replaced every few days. It may also be moved to a different site.

