Cardiac Catheterization (Dye Test)
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What is a cardiac catheterization?
This special test tells us how well your heart muscle and valves are working. It also tells us about the arteries that supply the heart muscle with oxygen.

How is a cardiac catheterization done?
• You will be awake during the test. You will be given a mild sedative before the test to help you relax. The doctor will freeze the groin area so you should feel no pain.
• Small catheters (hollow tubes) are passed through an artery and/or vein in the groin.
• They are passed up to the heart chambers where the pressure is measured.
• A special dye is then injected into the heart chambers and the arteries of the heart. This will help the doctors decide how well the heart muscle is pumping and if the valves are opening and closing correctly. The doctor can also see if the arteries are blocked.
• The test takes about 30 minutes-1 hour.
• Sometimes, the artery in your wrist can be used instead of your groin. Not everyone can
have the test done this way. Your doctor will tell you if this is an option for you.

**Are there any risks with this test?**

There are some risks with this test. Your doctor will talk about these risks with you.

**How do I get ready for this test?**

**Before the test:**

- A nurse will measure your height and weight. These measurements help your doctor decide how much dye to use for your test.
- An electrocardiogram (EKG) will be done. A sample of blood will be tested.
- A nurse will answer any questions you have.
- A doctor will examine you and explain the test to you.
- You will be given an “Information Letter” to read. The doctor will explain the risks of the test and then sign the consent with you.

**Can I take my usual medicines before this test?**

You may take your usual medicines on the evening before the test and during the night. The nurse will review your medicines with you. Sometimes, certain medicines should not be taken on the morning of the test.
Can I eat and drink before this test?
You may eat your supper the evening before the test as usual. A blood sample may be needed on the morning of your test. Ask your nurse if you may eat breakfast before coming to the hospital.

Day of the test on Nursing Unit 6.1, Cardiology Day Unit (CDU)

You will be receiving sedation during your test. You will require a responsible adult to report directly to the unit to pick you up, drive you home, and stay with you overnight when you are discharged. Please make arrangements before you arrive for your test.

What happens when I arrive on the nursing unit?
You will be settled in your room when it is ready. A nurse will clip a small area of hair in each groin using surgical clippers. When it is time for your test, you will be asked to empty your bladder (pee) and put on a “johnny shirt”. Underwear, socks, slippers and all jewelry must be removed. You may wear glasses, dentures and hearing aids. An intravenous (IV) will be started in your arm. The nurse will give you a light sedative (usually Valium®). You will then be taken to the Cardiac Cath Lab on a stretcher.
How long will I be in bed after my test?
To give the puncture site time to heal and to prevent bleeding, you will be on complete bedrest for up to 6 hours. Remember:

› Lie flat on your back.
› Do not lift your head from the pillow. You may turn your head from side to side.
› Do not put your elbows above your shoulders or your arms behind your head.
› Do not cross or bend your legs.
› You may wiggle your toes and flex your feet.
› The head of the bed can be raised 30 degrees.
› Avoid stretching activities such as reaching for things on your bedside table.

If your wrist was used for the test, you may get up right away when the sedative wears off.

How can I prevent bleeding from the puncture site?
You can help prevent bleeding by applying firm pressure over the Band-Aid® whenever you laugh, cough, sneeze, or pass your urine (pee). A warm, wet, trickling feeling in the groin area is often a sign of bleeding. You can help your nurse by checking your Band-Aid® every 30
minutes. Do this by applying light pressure over the Band-Aid® with the fingertips of your closest hand. Next, bring that hand close to your face (don’t lift your head) and check for blood on your fingertips. If you see blood, do not panic. Put the same hand back down over the Band-Aid® and apply firm pressure. Using your other hand, ring for your nurse right away. If you feel a lump under the Band-Aid®, follow the same procedure.

May I eat after my test?
While you are on bedrest, you will be offered finger foods (such as toast and sandwiches). They are easy to eat while lying flat. Do not limit your fluids as the dye used during your test has a drying effect. To prevent gas and stomach pains try not to “overeat” or eat too fast.

What can I do if I have back pain from lying flat?
If your back begins to bother you, please tell your nurse. She/he may be able to help by changing your position. You may also be given some pain pills.

How will I pass my urine while on bedrest?
You will use a urinal (bottle) or bedpan. If you have problems with this, please talk to your nurse.
Can friends and family visit after my test?
Friends and family members may be with you before your test and during your bedrest period. They may be asked to step outside the room during nursing care.

What can I expect if my procedure is done through the wrist?
• Bedrest is not needed. You will be able to get up when your sedative has worn off.
• You will have a pressure roll over the puncture site. This will be held in place with a special plastic clamp. The nurse will loosen this clamp at regular intervals until it can be removed.
• A pressure dressing will be put on after the clamp is removed. This is taken off in 24 hours and replaced with a Band-Aid®.
• If you see any bleeding, apply direct pressure and call your nurse.
• Do not put any pressure on the wrist used for your procedure. For example, do not push yourself up out of a chair.
• Expect mild tingling and tenderness of your hand and fingers. Ask the nurse for pain medicine if needed.
Who do I talk to if I have more questions?
If you have any questions, discomforts, or doubts please talk to your nurse.
Your nurse will give you a pamphlet called *Going Home After Your Cardiac Catheterization* for more information.