

Cardiac & Endovascular Center

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ's)



Arteriogram

What is an arteriogram?

An arteriogram is a minimally invasive study in which a contrast or "dye" is injected into an artery while X-Rays are taken of the area resulting in detailed images of the arterial anatomy. The images obtained from the arteriogram are useful in diagnosing and treating a variety of abnormalities. As with any invasive procedure, an arteriogram carries certain risks. The most common complication is a hematoma (bleeding under the skin). An arteriogram uses X-Rays to view the anatomy of the body's arteries and is also known as an angiogram. This is usually an outpatient test.

To create X-Ray images, contrast dye is injected through a catheter (a thin, flexible tube) that is threaded into the desired artery from an artery in the groin or in the arm. The dye makes blood vessels visible on X-Ray, and the resulting images are used to diagnose vascular conditions, help physicians plan procedures, or even guide physicians during treatments.

What do you need to do before having an arteriogram?

To prepare for an arteriogram, patients are often advised to:

- Stop taking Aspirin or other anti-clotting drugs several days before the test
- Drink plenty of fluids the day before the test
- Avoid eating or drinking after midnight the evening before the test
- Arrange for a ride home

What are the risk factors that could lead to complications?

Potential complications include excessive bleeding at the puncture site, allergic reactions, kidney failure, and arterial blockage caused by disrupted plaque. Risk factors for complications include:

- Allergy to iodine, which may cause a reaction to the dye
- Kidney problems, because the dye can be mildly toxic to the kidneys

What should I expect during this test?

The arteriogram generally takes one to three hours, plus two to six hours for observation afterward. The procedure is nearly painless, but involves mild discomfort from the initial arterial puncture and from lying flat for a long period of time. Immediately before the arteriogram, the patient is connected to an intra-venous line, through which fluids and medications are administered, and to machines that monitor heart rate, blood pressure and other vital signs. The part of the arm or leg where the dye is administered is shaved, cleaned, and injected with local anesthetic. A hollow needle punctures the artery and a catheter is inserted and guided to the desired location with the help of X-Ray images.

Once the catheter is in the proper place it is injected with contrast material. During and after the injection, X-Ray images are taken. The patient is told to hold his or her breath several times for about five to 15 seconds and to lie perfectly still to prevent distorting the X-Ray pictures. Results are often available immediately following the test.



What should I do after treatment?

After all X-Rays have been taken and the catheter removed, the arm or leg into which the catheter was inserted should be kept straight for several hours. During recovery, the patient is also asked to drink fluids, and a nurse checks vital signs regularly. Antibiotics may be given to prevent infection, and if necessary, painkillers are prescribed to relieve discomfort at the catheter site. At home, patients can:

- Resume a normal diet
- Continue drinking extra fluids for one to two days
- Keep the affected arm or leg extended but not elevated
- Avoid hot baths or showers for at least 12 hours after the arteriogram
- Avoid physical activities such as climbing stairs, driving, and walking

Most patients can resume normal activities within one or two days.

What are the possible complications?

The patient should notify medical personnel if complications arise. Complications may include bleeding, pain, or swelling at the site where the catheter was inserted, or pain, numbness, or coolness in the affected arm or leg.

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