



What Is Coronary Angioplasty?

Your heart's arteries can become clogged from a buildup of cholesterol, cells or other substances. This can reduce blood flow to your heart and cause chest discomfort. Sometimes a blood clot can suddenly form or get worse and completely block blood flow, leading to a heart attack. Angioplasty

opens blocked arteries and restores normal blood flow to your heart muscle.

Angioplasty, a type of percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI), is not major surgery. It is done through a small puncture in a leg or arm artery and opens a clogged heart artery by inflating a tiny balloon in it.

Why do I need it?

People with blockages in their heart arteries may need angioplasty if they are having lots of discomfort in their chest, or if their blockages

put them at risk of a heart attack or of dying. Each year more than a million people have angioplasty procedures.

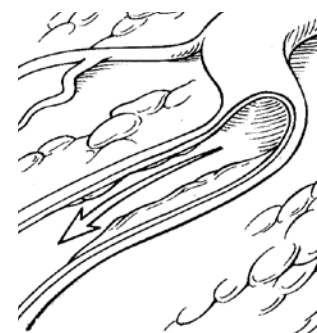
How is it done?



A catheter (thin tube) is guided into your clogged heart artery from an artery in your leg or arm. A very thin wire is threaded across the blockage. Over this wire, a thin, expandable balloon is passed to the blockage.



The balloon is inflated to push against the plaque and open the artery. Then the balloon is deflated and the catheter withdrawn.



Now the artery is wider and blood can flow more easily.

1. A doctor numbs a spot on your groin or arm and inserts a small tube into an artery. This hurts no more than a blood test.
2. This thin plastic tube (catheter) is threaded through the arterial system until it gets into a coronary (heart) artery.
3. By watching on a special X-ray screen, the doctor can move the catheter into the artery. Next, a very thin wire is threaded across the blockage. Over this wire, a catheter with a thin, expandable balloon on the end is passed to the blockage.
4. The balloon is inflated. It pushes plaque to the side and stretches the artery open, so blood can flow more easily. This may be done more than once.
5. In many patients a collapsed wire mesh tube called a stent, tightly mounted on a special balloon, is moved over the wire to the blocked area.
6. As the balloon is inflated, it opens the stent against the artery walls. The stent locks in this position and helps keep the artery open.
7. The balloon and catheters are taken out. Now the artery has been opened, and your heart will get the blood it needs.

Does angioplasty hurt?

- No, angioplasty causes very little pain. The doctor will numb the place where the catheter will be inserted. You may feel some pressure as the catheter is put in.
- You'll be awake and alert but may be given medicine to help you relax. Angioplasty can last from 30 minutes to several hours, depending on the type of blockage and how many blockages there are.
- The place where the catheter was put in may be sore afterwards, and bruising is common. If you notice any bleeding or increasing pain or swelling, tell your doctor.

What about afterwards?

- When the tube is removed from your leg or arm, a nurse or doctor will usually apply direct pressure for 15 minutes or longer to the place where the catheter was inserted to ensure there's no internal bleeding.
- If angioplasty is done through the leg, for several hours you'll lie quietly on your back and the doctors and nurses will check for any signs of bleeding or chest discomfort. If the procedure is done through the arm, you won't need to remain in bed.
- You'll almost always have to stay in the hospital for a night to rest. Occasionally a longer stay is required.
- There's a small risk that a blood clot will form inside the stent, blocking blood flow in the artery. Your doctor will prescribe aspirin or other medicine to help prevent this. It's important to keep taking these medicines for as long as the doctor indicates!
- Avoid heavy lifting or vigorous physical activity for 1-2 days after the procedure so the hole in your leg or arm artery can heal.
- Learn about the risk factors you need to change to keep your heart healthy.

How can I learn more?

1. Talk to your doctor, nurse or other health-care professionals. If you have heart disease or have had a stroke, members of your family also may be at higher risk. It's very important for them to make changes now to lower their risk.
2. Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart disease.
3. For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit StrokeAssociation.org.

We have many other fact sheets and educational booklets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one.

Knowledge is power, so *Learn and Live!*

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

Will I need angioplasty again?

Could anything go wrong?