

**CARDIAC TESTS: CARDIAC CATHETERIZATION**

**PATIENT/FAMILY INFORMATION SHEET**

**What is cardiac catheterization?**

A cardiac catheterization is a procedure in which a physician guides a thin plastic tube or catheter through a blood vessel in the arm or leg. It is then guided into the heart and the coronary arteries. The information that your physician gets from cardiac catheterization helps to diagnose and treat heart problems.

**What is the purpose of cardiac catheterization?**

Cardiac catheterization is used for diagnostic and treatment purposes. This procedure can detect:

- The heart's pumping ability
- The function of the valves
- Possible blood vessel blockage or narrowing.

The physician may perform additional diagnostic tests during the cardiac catheterization. To conduct different tests, your physician may insert a new catheter or reposition the catheter or x-ray equipment. This process is called coronary angiography. The evaluation of the heart's pumping action is called a ventriculogram.

**What can I expect during a cardiac catheterization?**

Cardiac catheterization is performed under local anesthesia. You may also be given a mild sedative to help you relax. You will be awake during the procedure and may view the pictures of your heart with your physician. During the procedure, x-ray contrast fluid/dye is injected into your blood vessels or heart chamber. You may be asked to hold your breath and you may feel a hot flash through your body for a few seconds during the injection. You should not feel pain or discomfort as the catheter moves through your body and into your heart. The procedure generally takes about 45 minutes. During that time the physician takes the pictures and the catheter is removed. A small pressure dressing will be placed over the catheterization injection site.

**What can I expect after a cardiac catheterization?**

After the procedure, you'll be asked to lie quietly for 4-6 hours. You will be asked to drink a minimum of six glasses of water to rid your body of the dye. During that time, your blood pressure is monitored frequently and the catheter insertion point is checked regularly to be sure there is no sign of bleeding.

*Reference: American Heart Association @ [www.americanheart.org](http://www.americanheart.org)*

*For more Patient Education Fact Sheets, see the Greenwich Hospital web site at [www.greenhosp.org](http://www.greenhosp.org) and click on Patients & Visitors, then Patient Education*

Rev. 8/04