

Cardiac catheterization: Care at home

What is cardiac catheterization?

Cardiac catheterization is the threading of a catheter (tube) through either a vein or artery into the heart. The catheter is inserted in one or both groin areas. Sometimes other sites may also be used, such as the arm or neck.

The cardiac catheterization is used to diagnose problems with the blood flow and structure of the heart, or to open or close certain heart structures. Your child will be asleep or sedated and comfortable during the procedure. (See the education sheet “Sedation for a procedure.”)

What should we do before the test?

Children and young adults of all ages may want to bring a comfort item and something for distraction. A favorite video or a CD player and favorite music will help your child lie quietly after the procedure.

What can I expect after the procedure?

The nurses will frequently check your child’s vital signs (heart rate, breathing rate, temperature, blood pressure) and pulses in the feet, legs, and/or arms.

Your child will have a bandage or pressure dressing where the catheter was inserted. If it is still on, remove it in _____.

Your child will need to stay flat in bed for a few hours after the procedure, keeping the affected area still. Your child should not bend the knees, sit up, or lift the head up off the bed. The pressure caused by these activities can cause bleeding at the groin site. The nurse will tell you when your child can get up.

How can I care for my child?

Watch the insertion site(s) for bleeding. If bleeding occurs, apply pressure directly on the site for 15 continuous minutes with a clean washcloth or gauze and call the doctor right away.

Expect a small amount of bruising around the insertion site. Watch for increased bruising or swelling.

Watch for signs of infection:

- fever higher than 101° F (38.4° C)
- swelling, warmth, redness, tenderness, or drainage at the site

Compare the temperature and color of your child’s legs or arms several times a day for two days. Check to see if the leg or arm used for the catheterization is cooler, paler, or darker than normal.

Showers and sponge baths are permitted. When bathing, you may clean the site gently with soap and water. Your child should not have a tub bath for the next 2 days after the catheterization.

Your child may have some discomfort in the site. You may give your child acetaminophen (Tylenol® or another brand) up to every 4 hours if needed for pain. Before giving it, be sure to check your child's temperature.

What can my child eat?

Your child may have clear liquids (such as Popsicles®, water, apple or white grape juice, broth, flat sodas, or gelatin). If there is no vomiting, you may add regular foods as tolerated.

How active can my child be?

For the first 2 days after the procedure, avoid contact sports, rough play, or any activity that could cause a fall. Do **not** allow:

- riding bikes and other riding toys
- physical education classes
- swinging
- jumping
- heavy lifting

When should I call the cardiologist?

- signs of infection
- increased bruising at the site
- if the leg or arm used for the procedure is cooler, paler, or darker than normal
- **if any bleeding occurs**

Questions?

This sheet is not specific to your child but provides general information. If you have any questions, please call the cardiology clinic.

For more reading material about this and other health topics, please call or visit the Family Resource Center library, or visit our Web site: www.childrensmn.org.

Children's Hospitals and Clinics of Minnesota
Patient/Family Education
2525 Chicago Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55404
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