



British Heart  
Foundation

# Angiogram

## Your quick guide



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British Heart  
Foundation

Coronary heart disease is the UK's single biggest killer.

For over 50 years we've pioneered research that's transformed the lives of people living with heart and circulatory conditions. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease.

But so many people still need our help. From babies born with life-threatening heart problems to the many Mums, Dads and Grandparents who survive a heart attack and endure the daily battles of living with heart failure.

Join our fight for every heartbeat in the UK. Every pound raised, minute of your time and donation to our shops will help make a difference to people's lives.

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## What is a coronary angiogram?

An angiogram is a test that looks inside your coronary arteries. Angiograms are also called **coronary angiograms** or **cardiac catheterisation**.

An angiogram helps to diagnose coronary heart disease. It can show where any narrowings are in your coronary arteries and how severe they are.

It can help your doctor decide what treatment you need. Many people who have an angiogram go on to have a treatment called **coronary angioplasty**. This is often done at the same time.



## How long will it take?

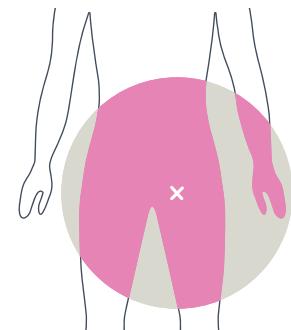
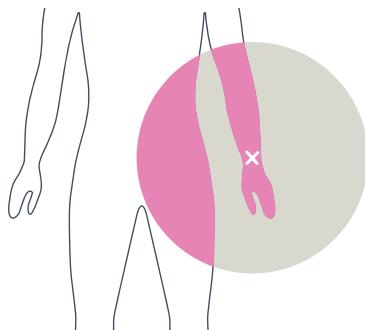
An angiogram is done in a catheterisation or cath lab. It usually takes about half an hour, although it sometimes takes longer. You will be asked not to eat or drink anything for a few hours beforehand.



1

## What happens?

You'll be given a local anaesthetic in your wrist or groin to numb the area.



2

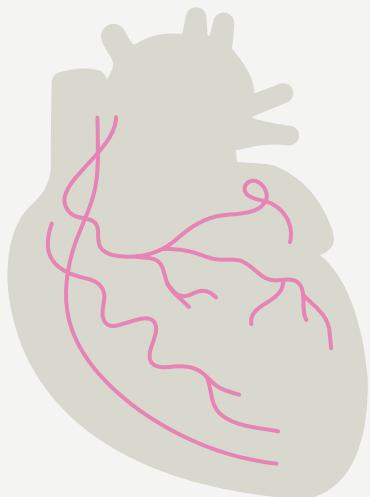
A catheter (a thin, flexible tube) will be passed into an artery in your groin or wrist.

3

Using an x-ray, the catheter is directed through your blood vessels and into your heart. A special dye is passed through the catheter – you might feel a hot, flushing sensation at this point.

#### What does the dye reveal?

The dye will show up the coronary arteries and any narrowed areas or blockages on the x-ray.



#### Will I feel anything?

You won't feel the catheter moving inside you, but you may have the occasional palpitation. Some people experience angina during their angiogram.

**If you feel unwell, have pain or are uncomfortable at any time, tell your doctor or nurse.**

You'll be linked to a heart monitor that records your heart rate and rhythm.



## Edgar's story

**Edgar had an angiogram to see if he needed treatment to help with his angina.**

"Everything was explained to me by my cardiologist before we started.

I had the catheter put in through my wrist. As they put the dye in, I felt a chill but absolutely no pain.

The doctor was talking to me the whole time. He made sure the screen was visible to me so that I could see the image of my heart and the blocked artery.

As an engineer who likes to know how everything works, I found it very interesting.

Afterwards, the doctor talked me through my options and I chose to be referred for coronary bypass surgery."



**“The angiogram  
was an important  
step on the road  
to finding out what  
was wrong with me.”**

Edgar, took control

### What happens after the test?

The catheter will be removed  
and the nurse or doctor  
will press on the cut where  
the catheter went in.

### What happens after the test?

It's normal to bleed a little  
bit when the catheter is  
removed and the area will  
be checked regularly. The  
nurse or doctor may insert  
a plug called an Angio-seal  
to stop any bleeding.



### When can I go home?

You'll need to stay in bed for a short time  
after the test. Most people can go home  
on the same day, but some people may  
stay in hospital longer.

It's usual to feel tired  
afterwards, but you should  
be back to normal within  
a few days.





## Are there any immediate after-effects?

The most common after-effect is bruising around the area where your catheter was put in and it may feel tender for a few days. It's normal to have swelling or a small lump around the area too.

Some people develop a build-up of blood under the skin called a haematoma. This can be uncomfortable, but should go down after a few days. If you're worried about any of the after-effects, contact your doctor.



## Are there any serious complications?

### An angiogram is a safe test and serious complications are unusual.

It's rare for anyone to have a reaction to the dye, but a very small number of people are highly allergic to it. If you know you are allergic to iodine or contrast agents, tell the doctor beforehand.

## Small risk

The risk of having a heart attack, stroke or dying during an angiogram is very small. Your doctor will explain this to you before the procedure.



The risk depends on your overall health and your individual heart condition. Your doctor will not recommend you have the test if they don't feel the benefits outweigh this small risk.

During a coronary angiogram you are exposed to some radiation.

Before you have the test, have a chat with your doctor about the benefits and possible risks of having an angiogram and any other worries that you have.



**Use this space to make notes for discussions with your doctor.**



**Join us in the fight for every heartbeat.**

For 50 years the British Heart Foundation has been funding life saving heart research. Our work has been central to the discoveries of vital treatments that are changing the fight against heart disease. But we need your support to continue this fight.

**Visit [bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk) to make a donation or find out more.**

## For more information

You can order more information on Angiogram, including:

## Tests for heart conditions (booklet)

## The Road Ahead: Your guide to heart tests and treatments (DVD)

[bhf.org.uk/tests](http://bhf.org.uk/tests)

To order our booklets or DVDs:

call 0300 200 2222

email **orderline@bhf.org.uk**

or visit [bhf.org.uk/publications](http://bhf.org.uk/publications)

## Contact

For more information visit the British Heart Foundation website [bhf.org.uk](http://bhf.org.uk)

Heart Helpline 0300 330 3311

(a similar cost to 01 and 02 numbers)

For information and support on anything heart-related.