

Angiogram

Why is it done?

An Angiogram is a real-time X-ray exam of the arteries to diagnose blockages and other blood vessel problems. This exam can be performed to look at the vessels in your legs, feet, arms, neck, head, or stomach. In many cases, the interventional radiologist can treat a blocked blood vessel without surgery at the same time the angiogram is performed.

How to Prepare

You may be advised to stop taking medications called blood thinners prior to your procedure to reduce the risk of bleeding. Your medications should be reviewed with you by your physician when your test is scheduled and directions given as to what medications you may need to stop taking and when. Also if you are allergic to iodine or iodine containing contrasts, you will be ordered medications to take prior to your test to prevent any allergic reactions. A nurse from the Radiology Department will call you the day before your scheduled procedure to instruct you with your arrival time to the hospital. They will also tell you when to stop eating and drinking and any instructions that are needed with your medications.

What to expect during the procedure

The radiologist will discuss the procedure with you and your family prior to the procedure and have you sign a consent form. During the procedure, you will receive IV fluids and pain medications will be given to you to make you comfortable. Your heart and vital signs will be monitored frequently during the procedure. You will be awake but sedated so that you will be more relaxed. Your doctor will ask you to do basic functions such as breathing out, and holding your breath. It is important for you to lay still and

follow instructions. The area of the groin or arm where the catheter will be inserted is shaved, cleaned, and numbed. During the angiogram, the doctor inserts a thin tube (catheter) into the artery through a small incision in the skin about the size of the tip of a pencil. A substance called a contrast agent (X-ray dye) is injected to make the blood vessels visible on the X-ray. Interventional radiologists treat blockages with techniques called angioplasty and stenting to improve blood flow. The procedure will usually take 1-3 hours depending on the severity of the blockage.

What to expect after

After the procedure, you will be on bed rest for 2 to 6 hours. It will be important to keep your extremity with the puncture site straight to prevent bleeding. The head of the bed will be elevated slightly but no more than 30 degrees. The nurse will be monitoring the puncture site, vital signs and peripheral pulses frequently after the procedure. You will be able to eat after the procedure, but you will need assistance. You will not be able to sit up for several hours. You will not be able to get out of bed to go to the bathroom; you will be offered a bedpan or urinal. Notify your nurse if you have any signs of bleeding, pain or problems. You are not permitted to drive a car for 24 hours due to the pain medications so please make sure you have arranged transportation to take you home after your procedure. You will also have some restrictions at home you will need to follow after your procedure. These will depend on where your access site for your test was and will be reviewed with you at the time of your discharge from the hospital. You may remove your dressing in 24 hours and shower. You should not take tub baths, be in swimming pools or hot tubs for one week. An adhesive dressing may be applied to your site if needed. It is common after the procedure to have bruising and tenderness at your access site. You can take over the counter pain medication or your usual pain reliever as directed. The doctor will schedule to see you back in 2 to 4 weeks for an office visit to check on your progress or for further intervention if needed.