

## Coronary Artery Disease: Angioplasty

Angioplasty is a way to get more blood flowing to the heart muscle. Your doctor may call it percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI).

It is a procedure that widens a coronary artery that was narrowed or blocked. Coronary arteries are blood vessels that provide blood and other nutrients to the heart muscle.

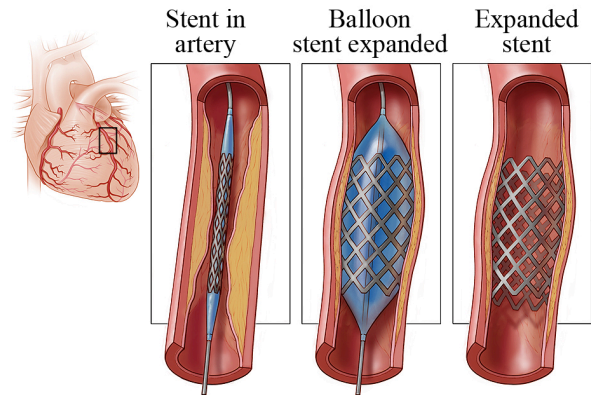
If you have a heart attack, an emergency angioplasty might be done to prevent more damage to your heart.

Or, you might choose to have this procedure if you have angina symptoms that do not go away with medicine and healthy lifestyle changes. An angioplasty can improve blood flow to your heart. But it is not a cure for heart disease.

### How it is done

Before angioplasty, the doctor will do a test called a coronary angiogram. For this test, a tiny tube called a catheter is threaded through an artery in your wrist or groin and up to the coronary arteries. A dye is then sent through the catheter. The dye makes your coronary arteries show up on a screen so the doctor can see them. If one is narrowed or blocked, your doctor will do angioplasty.

During angioplasty, the doctor threads a catheter into the narrowed or blocked artery. At the end of the catheter is a tiny balloon. The doctor inflates the balloon inside the



artery to open the blocked or narrow area.

The doctor may put a stent in your artery during angioplasty. A stent is a small tube that expands against the walls of the artery. The stent helps keep the artery open.

The doctor may use a type of stent called a drug-eluting stent. These stents are coated with medicines that keep scar tissue from forming inside the stent. This helps keep the artery open.

Angioplasty doesn't require a large cut (incision). You'll get medicine to help you relax, but you'll be awake during the procedure.

### What to expect after the procedure

In the hospital:

- A small device may be used to close the blood vessel. You may have a bandage or compression device at the catheter site. This will prevent bleeding.
- Nurses will check your heart rate and blood pressure and check the insertion site for bleeding.
- If the insertion site is at your groin, you will need to keep your leg straight for up to a few hours.
- If the insertion site is in your wrist, you may need to keep your arm still for at least 2 hours.
- You may go home the same day. Or you may stay at least 1 night in the hospital.

Once you are home:

- Do not do strenuous exercise and do not lift, pull, or push anything heavy until your doctor says it is okay. This may be for several days.
- Check the insertion site every day for signs of infection: redness, swelling, pus, or fever.
- Follow your doctor's instructions on how to care for the catheter site.
- Do not smoke. Smoking raises your risk of having the artery close after angioplasty or stent placement.
- Keep all your follow-up appointments. Angioplasty is not a cure. See your doctor regularly and have a heart-healthy lifestyle.
- Take your medicines as directed.

You will take medicine to help prevent blood clots. The medicine helps prevent a heart attack. If you get a stent, you may take aspirin plus another medicine. If you got a drug-eluting stent, you may take both of these medicines for at least 6 months. If you got a bare-metal stent, you may take both medicines for at least 1 month. If you had a heart attack, you may take both medicines for at least 1 year. If you have a high risk of bleeding, your doctor may shorten the time you take these medicines. You can work with your doctor to decide how long you will take both of these medicines. This decision may depend on your risk of a heart attack, your risk of bleeding,

and your preferences about taking medicine.

Your doctor might recommend cardiac rehab for you. In rehab, you'll get education and support to help you recover and make lifestyle changes to keep your heart healthy.

## Risks

Angioplasty has some risks. They include:

- The need for emergency bypass surgery during the procedure.
- Heart attack, stroke, and death.

Your age and health affect your risk of problems. Your doctor can help you know your risk.

The risks of problems where the catheter was placed include:

- Bleeding and damage to blood vessels.
- Pain, bruising, and swelling.

## When to call your doctor

### Call your doctor if:

- You have any signs of infection. These include:
  - Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness at the insertion site.
  - Red streaks leading from the insertion site.
  - Pus draining from the insertion site.
  - Fever.
- You have pain or bleeding at the insertion site.
- Your leg or hand is painful, looks blue, or feels cold, numb, or tingly.
- You have any questions or concerns.



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