



The Wellington Hospital

Information for Patients Undergoing an Angiogram / Angioplasty

What is an Angiogram?

An angiogram is an x-ray test to look at the blood supply to an area in the body. It is usually used to investigate the arteries in the legs, to see if there is any narrowing or any blockages that may be contributing to a patient's symptoms.

A dye (contrast) is injected into an artery in the groin and circulates around the body. The contrast is visible on x-ray pictures, which are then taken to visualise the arteries. The pictures then help the doctor in the planning of further treatment.

Alternatives:

Often an ultrasound scan will have been performed before this procedure, called a duplex scan. However sometimes this scan may be too difficult (e.g. does not always clearly assess the circulation below the knee. In most cases a duplex scan will have been performed before arranging an angioplasty.

What to expect:

You will be admitted to one of the wards in the south building on the day of your angiogram. The procedure itself is done in the x-ray department under the guidance of a radiologist (x-ray doctor).

All usual medications should be taken on the day, unless you are taking a tablet called warfarin. Warfarin is normally stopped at least 48 hours before an angiogram. Please let your Referring Consultant know as soon as possible if you take warfarin or a diabetic tablet called metformin and why.

During the Procedure:

You will not usually be sedated for the procedure but local anaesthetic is used to numb the injection site in the groin. The contrast gives a sensation of warmth as it is injected and you may feel that you want to pass water. These sensations will only last a few seconds. Once the x-ray pictures are taken firm pressure is applied over the puncture site to reduce the chance of bleeding.

Afterwards:

You will need to lie flat for 4-6 hours after the test to prevent any sudden bleeding or bruising at the injection site in the groin. It is important to drink plenty of fluid at this time to help the body get rid of the contrast through the kidneys.

You may be able to go home the same (or the following) day, and should have someone available to collect you. You are advised to rest for the remainder of the

day and can return to normal activity the following day. You are advised not to drive for 24 hours after the procedure and to avoid heavy lifting for 2 – 3 days.

The results of the angiogram will usually be discussed with you during your hospital stay or at an outpatients clinic appointment.

Angioplasty / Stent insertion:

Occasionally if patients have a short narrowing within the artery, this can be stretched open by a procedure called angioplasty. The process is similar to having an angiogram, but in addition a small wire and plastic tube (catheter) is passed into the artery in the groin and fed along to the blockage, where a balloon is inflated to stretch open the narrowed area. Sometimes it is also necessary to use a stent (small wire tube placed inside the artery) to keep the stretched area open. Angioplasty / stent insertion is sometimes performed at the time of an initial angiogram, but may require a separate admission.

Complications:

Angiography is generally a very safe procedure but some occasional complications include bleeding or bruising at the groin injection site; if you experience sudden bleeding or swelling in the groin, press on the area firmly and contact your GP or the hospital for advice. Angioplasty is not always successful and can occasionally worsen symptoms in the legs. Rare complications include debris from the narrowed artery dislodging which may block another artery; this can result in the need for urgent surgery or loss of a limb.

This leaflet is a guide and not a complete list of all the information to do with angiograms/angioplasties. If you have any further questions about having an angiogram or angioplasty, more information can be found on the following websites:

Royal College of Radiologists: www.rcr.ac.uk or www.goingfora.com

Vascular Society: www.vascularsociety.org.uk

British Vascular Foundation: www.bvf.org.uk

Alternatively, contact your consultant at the hospital or one of the imaging nurses who can be reached on 020 7483 5077.