

## Angioplasty and stent insertion

This fact sheet tells you about angioplasty and stent insertion, and what is involved. Please read this sheet before having this procedure. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

### What is an angioplasty and a stent insertion?

These medical imaging procedures are used to widen a narrowed artery (a type of blood vessel) to improve blood flow.

Angioplasty uses a small, sausage-shaped balloon to stretch an artery open and improve blood flow.

A stent is a small, metal cylinder that acts like a scaffold to hold an artery open. It is often put in place after the angioplasty to make sure the blood vessel stays open.

Before having any of these procedures, you will need to have an angiogram, which shows which arteries are too narrow. For this procedure, a catheter (a long, thin plastic tube) is inserted into a small cut in your groin (occasionally in your upper arm). The catheter is then placed in the right position using a moving-image X-ray (fluoroscopy). Contrast medium is injected into the catheter. This lets the imaging staff see photos of narrowed arteries on a special camera (see the *Angiogram* fact sheet to find out more).

### What is involved?

You will be given instructions on how to prepare for your angioplasty (and stent insertion if you need it). This will include information on any medicines you may need to take or stop taking before the procedure.

You will also need to fill in a safety checklist for the contrast medium (see *Iodinated contrast* fact sheet). If you need to take a mild sedative (medicine to make you drowsy) or a general anaesthetic (to put you to sleep), you will need to complete another safety checklist.

**Before you have any of these procedures, you should tell your doctor and the imaging staff whether you have any allergies, are pregnant or think you might be pregnant.**

To perform the angioplasty, the doctor will insert a thin wire through the catheter and pass it across the narrow part in the artery that needs widening, and then insert the balloon and/or stent.

To reduce the risk of blood clots forming and blocking small blood vessels, the doctor might use anti-clotting medicines or devices.

You can have this procedure while you are awake, drowsy or under a general anaesthetic. It depends on your medical condition and how involved the procedure is.

Angioplasty and stent-insertion procedures can take one to two hours.

### What happens after the procedure?

You might be admitted to a hospital ward to stay overnight. The nurses may also need to monitor and control your blood pressure.

A radiologist (a specialist doctor) will assess the images of your arteries and then send them to your referring doctor.

To leave the hospital, you must have a friend or relative to take you home and stay overnight with you.

## Are there any risks?

The risks of the procedure depend on which artery is being treated. General risks include:

- bleeding and bruising where the catheter was inserted in the groin
- the treated artery could become blocked, making your symptoms worse in the short term
- having an allergic reaction to the contrast medium (see *Iodinated contrast* fact sheet), sedation or any of the other medicines used
- experiencing kidney failure, which can happen if you have diabetes or chronic kidney disease.

## For more information

InsideRadiology by the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Radiologists: [www.insideradiology.com.au](http://www.insideradiology.com.au)

RadiologyInfo by the American College of Radiology and Radiological Society of North America: [www.radiologyinfo.org](http://www.radiologyinfo.org)

The Australian Radiation Protection and Nuclear Safety Agency: [www.arpansa.gov.au](http://www.arpansa.gov.au)

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