

What is an Angioplasty?

Angioplasty is a procedure used to open a blocked or narrowed artery with the help of a catheter that has a small inflatable balloon at its tip. Sometimes a small mesh tube called a stent is placed in the artery to keep it open. This procedure is performed in the X-ray department by an Interventional Radiologist (specialist X-ray doctor). X-ray imaging helps the doctor to guide and position the catheter into the exact place.

Why do I need this procedure?

Other tests have shown signs of a disease that hardens and narrows the blood vessels, due to a build up of plaque (atherosclerosis). This condition can cause a number of serious health problems, including decreased blood flow to the extremities (peripheral vascular disease).

If there is severe atherosclerosis an angioplasty can be done to open the blocked or narrowed artery and improve the blood flow to that area. It is much less invasive than surgery and can be repeated if the disease further develops along the same, or in another, artery in the future.

What should I expect?

You will be asked to sign a consent form. It is important that you understand the procedure and its benefits and risks. Bring a family member or friend with you, to help with your questions or concerns about the procedure. On the day of the procedure, you will have an intravenous line (IV) placed into a vein in your arm. This IV line will also be used to give you other medicines and fluids during the procedure.

You will be asked to lie down and the Radiologist will give you local anaesthetic and a small cut made in your groin or arm, depending on where the problem area is. A catheter will be inserted into the artery and positioned into the correct area using x-ray and x-ray dye, where the balloon is then inflated. The balloon may need to be inflated several times for the narrowed area to open up well enough to improve the blood flow.

When the procedure is finished, the balloon and catheter are removed. The Radiologist will then press firmly on the skin entry point for 10-15 minutes, to prevent any bleeding. It usually takes about 90 minutes to perform, but this is not an absolute time-line.

What happens after the procedure?

If you are an inpatient or being admitted, you will go to your hospital room where the staff will monitor you. Each patient's length of stay will vary.

If you are outpatient, then you will go to the Same Day Surgery unit (SDS) to recover and then you can go home. Due to the medication you will receive, you won't be allowed to drive yourself. Make sure you arrange for someone to take you home.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the Diagnostic Imaging Department at 416-431-8107.