



# After Your Coronary Intervention Procedure

*Steps to a healthy heart*

Coronary intervention procedures are used to open one or more of the arteries that supply blood and oxygen to your heart muscle. This handout gives guidelines for activity and diet, follow-up care, and medicines. It can also help you get started on reducing your specific risk factors for future heart problems.

Your Cardiologist:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone:

\_\_\_\_\_

## Contents

|  |         |
|--|---------|
| About the Procedure.....                         | 2       |
| After Your Procedure.....                        | 2 and 3 |
| Discharge.....                                   | 3       |
| When You Get Home.....                           | 4 and 5 |
| Risk Factors.....                                | 5 and 6 |
| Diet, Weight, and Cholesterol.....               | 6       |
| Exercise .....                                   | 6 and 7 |
| Dietary Changes Can Make a Big Difference! ..... | 7       |
| Stress .....                                     | 8       |
| To Learn More .....                              | 9       |

## **About the Procedure**

Coronary interventions are done by a specialized health care team in the cardiac catheterization laboratory. There are many different interventions to open the coronary arteries. Your doctor will select the one that is best for you.

After your intervention, your heart will get more blood and oxygen, which will help it work better. This handout describes what *you* can do for your heart.

### ***Take Charge***

Family history of heart disease is a risk factor neither you nor your doctor can control. But, there are many changes you can make to improve the quality, and maybe the length, of your life. You can change your lifestyle to lower your risk factors for heart disease. Do all that you can. Diabetes and high blood pressure are risk factors that can be controlled with healthy lifestyle choices and regular medical care. Some other risk factors for heart disease that you have control over are:

- Smoking
- High cholesterol
- Excess weight
- Food choices

## **After Your Procedure**

### ***Catheterization Only***

After your doctor has gathered all the information needed from the procedure, the catheter(s) and sheath are removed. Pressure is applied to the insertion site to prevent bleeding.

A sterile dressing is then placed over the insertion site to keep the area clean. The site will be checked regularly by your nurse.

- If an artery in your leg is used, you must keep your leg straight for 3 to 6 hours during your recovery time. You may need to keep it straight longer if a stent is placed.
- If an artery in your arm is used, you will have a band around your arm for 2 to 4 hours. The band helps close your artery and stop the bleeding. You must limit your arm use before and after the band comes off.

- Different types of devices may be used to close your artery and stop the bleeding. You will receive instructions for the device that you have.

After the catheterization, you will be transported back to the Interventional Cardiac Recovery Unit (ICRU), where you will begin to recover. If you have an angiogram with no intervention procedure, you can expect to stay in the ICRU at least 6 hours after your procedure.

During recovery, you will need to lie flat. Your nurse will help you stay comfortable. You will be able to eat as usual. You may be given pain medicines if you have any discomfort from lying flat.

Your pulse, blood pressure, and dressing will be checked often during the first 3 to 6 hours after your procedure.

### ***Catheterization with an Intervention***

If an intervention is done, **expect to stay in the hospital overnight.** Because you may not know ahead of time whether or not you will have an intervention, make arrangements to stay in the hospital for at least 24 hours.

## **Discharge**

Before you are discharged from the hospital, a doctor or nurse practitioner will examine your insertion site. They will also talk with you about the results of your procedure.

If your medicines or diet need to be adjusted, this will be done before discharge. Your nurse will teach you about these changes and will talk with you about your follow-up care. Ask questions if you do not understand something your nurse tells you.

**You must have someone drive you home after your procedure.** You cannot drive yourself.

## When You Get Home

Follow these instructions after you go home from the hospital:

### *Activity*

- For 24 hours after your procedure, do **not** drive.

#### **If the catheter was inserted in your groin:**

- On the day after your procedure, you may return to light activity and you may drive.
- Avoid strenuous activity for **48 hours**.
- Do **not** lift more than 5 pounds for the next **5 days**, or as you were instructed.
- You may shower the day after your procedure, but avoid tub baths, hot tubs, or swimming for **5 days**.
- You will have a bruise at the insertion site. It might spread down your leg over the next day. It may take **2 to 3 weeks** to go away.

#### **If the catheter was inserted in your arm:**

- For **2 days**:
  - Do **not** lift more than 1 pound with the affected arm.
  - Avoid wrist movement. Do not flex or rotate your wrist, and do not push or pull anything. Do not push yourself up from a sitting or a lying-down position.
- For **5 days**, avoid vigorous exercise that uses the affected arm.
- You may shower the day after your procedure, but avoid tub baths, hot tubs, or swimming for **3 days**.
- It is normal to have a small bruise or lump at the insertion site.

### *Follow-up*

- **Schedule a follow-up visit with your heart doctor (cardiologist) or primary care provider.** It is important that you do not miss this appointment. Follow-up visits are usually scheduled for 2 to 4 weeks after you leave the hospital.
- After your procedure, the artery in your heart can become blocked again. Watch for the same symptoms that you had before the procedure.
- **Call your doctor right away if your symptoms return.**

### *Medicine Instructions*

- Your doctor will prescribe aspirin to prevent clotting in the artery that was treated.
- If you had a stent placed, you will be taking a blood-thinning medicine similar to aspirin that will help prevent blood clots. One of these is called clopidogrel (Plavix), but your cardiologist may prescribe a similar medicine with a different name.
- For minor pain, you may take regular (325 mg) or extra strength (500 mg) acetaminophen (Tylenol). Do not take more than 4 gm (4,000 mg) in a 24-hour period.
- Resume all your prescribed medicines. Call your doctor if you have side effects, but do not stop taking the medicines unless your doctor tells you to.
- **Carry a list of your medicines with you at all times. Bring all of your medicines with you whenever you see your doctor.**

### **Risk Factors**

#### *Smoking*

The tar and nicotine in tobacco smoke cause your arteries to narrow and spasm (contract). Carbon monoxide in the smoke reduces the natural blood-thinning effects of your artery walls. This can lead to the artery that your doctor opened becoming blocked again.

**If you smoke, you need to stop NOW.** You should also avoid being in the same room with anyone who is smoking.

If you use nicotine patches or nicotine gum to stop smoking, **DO NOT SMOKE** while you are using them. Smoking while using nicotine products may cause a stroke or heart attack.

#### *Local Stop-Smoking Programs*

The American Cancer Society has a list of stop-smoking programs in the Seattle area. If you live outside the Seattle area, they will be glad to refer you to a program or agency in your area.

Call the Washington Division of the American Cancer Society at 800-ACS-2345, or call or write one of these agencies:

**American Cancer Society**, [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org)  
4535 California Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98116  
206-937-7169

**Remember the American Heart Association's recommended usage of nitroglycerin.**

**If you have angina symptoms:**

- 1. Place a nitroglycerin under your tongue. If the angina does not go away in 5 minutes, place a second nitroglycerin under your tongue.**
- 2. Wait 5 minutes, and if you still have angina, place a third nitroglycerin under your tongue.**
- 3. If you still have pain after 15 minutes and you have used 3 nitroglycerin, do NOT drive yourself to the hospital! CALL 9-1-1.**

**American Heart Association**, [www.amhrt.org](http://www.amhrt.org)  
4414 Woodland Park Ave. N, Seattle, WA 98103  
206-632-6881

**American Lung Association**, [www.lungusa.org](http://www.lungusa.org)  
2625 Third Ave., Seattle, WA 98121  
206-441-5100

### **Diet, Weight, and Cholesterol**

What you eat (your diet) is a very important part of treating and preventing artery blockages after your procedure. By eating the right foods and exercising, you can also control or lose weight.

Diet changes recommended for cardiac patients are:

- Restrict total fat intake (both saturated and unsaturated fats) to decrease the level of fats in your blood. These fats can cause blockages in your arteries.
- Eat foods that are low in cholesterol. Ask your health care provider if you need medicine to lower your cholesterol.
- Avoid foods that are high in sodium (salt) to prevent high blood pressure.
- Limit beverages with caffeine such as coffee and tea. Caffeine stimulates your heart and makes it work harder.
- Lose excess weight by following a healthy weight-reducing diet under a doctor's supervision.
- Plan to lose weight by changing your lifestyle. Do **not** go on a crash diet. Most people who lose weight on crash diets gain back the weight when the diet is over. And, crash diets can damage your vital organs, including your heart.

### **Exercise**

*Aerobic* exercise (exercise that increases your body's use of oxygen) may help you lose weight, but more importantly, it will help you feel better. Make exercise a part of your daily routine. Talk with your health care provider before beginning any new exercise, and add new activities slowly.

Walking is a great way to exercise. Start with a 5-minute stroll at an easy pace, and add a minute or so every few days. Slowly work up to a 30- to 60-minute brisk walk, 4 to 5 times a week.

Swimming is also a great workout for your heart, but weight loss from swimming will be slower. This is because your body works to keep you warm when you are in the water by producing fat to insulate you. Still, if you enjoy swimming, it is fine to include it in your exercise program, along with walking.

## Dietary Changes Can Make a Big Difference!

Improve your heart health by choosing foods from the “Recommended” column. The foods in the “Avoid” column may be harmful to your heart and blood vessels.

| Food                                       | Recommended  | Avoid   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Vegetables</b>                          | Fresh, frozen, or canned vegetables without saturated fat; baked beans with no bacon or fat  | Buttered, creamed, or fried vegetables; pork and beans  |
| <b>Fruit</b>                               | Fresh, frozen, canned (packed in juice), or dried fruit or juices, avocado in small amounts  | Coconut   |
| <b>Breads, Grains, Cereals, and Pastas</b> | Whole grain, raisin, French, white, and rye breads; bagels, graham crackers, pretzels, and other low-fat crackers; cold and hot cereals and other grain products such as pasta, rice, barley, oats, and others | Rolls or bread made with egg yolks or saturated fats (most commercial baked goods), egg noodles   |
| <b>Dairy</b>                               | 1% or nonfat milk, buttermilk, nonfat yogurt, 1% or nonfat cottage cheese, sherbet, nonfat frozen yogurt   | Ice cream, cream cheese, sour cream, whipped topping, cream substitutes that contain coconut or palm oil, chocolate milk, evaporated milk, condensed whole milk |
| <b>Protein Foods</b>                       | Chicken and turkey (without skin), lean beef, veal, pork, lamb, fish and shellfish (boiled, baked, or steamed), tofu, legumes, egg whites, and egg substitutes   | Egg yolks, heavily marbled or fatty meats (luncheon meat, bacon, sausage), organ meats (liver, brain, kidney, and sweetbreads)                                  |
| <b>Fats</b>                                | Safflower oil, corn oil, cottonseed oil, sunflower oil, sesame oil, canola oil, olive oil, soybean oil, peanut butter, and soft margarine  | Butter, cream, lard, bacon, and meat drippings; cocoa butter (chocolate), coconut, and palm oil   |
| <b>Beverages</b>                           | Fruit and vegetable juices, water, buttermilk, carbonated beverages, decaf coffee and tea, low-fat (1%) milk, skim milk  | Cream, whole milk, evaporated whole milk, coffee and tea with caffeine  |
| <b>Desserts</b>                            | Angel food cake, Jell-O, meringue pies, frozen yogurt, nonfat ice creams, and baked goods made with allowed ingredients, such as polyunsaturated fats, skim milk, egg whites                                   | Baked goods that contain whole milk, saturated fats or egg yolks, cashews or macadamia nuts, or chocolate   |
| <b>Sweets and Snacks</b>                   | Jams, jellies, honey, syrup, fat-free candy, popcorn with no butter added  | Chocolate, caramel, butter mints, fudge, buttered popcorn   |

## **Stress**

Tension, anxiety, emotional upset, pressure and strain are all forms of stress. When you are under stress, your blood pressure rises and your heart beats faster. All of these things make your heart work harder.

While you may be unable to control stress in your life, you can control how you respond to and deal with it. You might choose to attend a class or workshop to learn and practice ways to control your response to stress. These may be offered by local colleges and community organizations such as the American Heart Association (see page 6 for contact information). Ask your doctor or nurse for more information.

If you are feeling stressed, try using one of the methods below to help you relax and decrease the effects of stress on your body.

### ***Deep Breathing***

When we are tense, we often breathe faster, more shallowly, and irregularly. To decrease stress:

- Inhale slowly through your nose, letting your abdomen blow up like a balloon.
- Exhale slowly through pursed lips, allowing your jaws to relax.
- Repeat this relaxed breathing until you feel the tension going away.

### ***Relaxation***

This exercise involves tensing and relaxing individual muscle groups. Starting with your feet and slowly moving up to your face, first tighten then relax 1 group of muscles at a time. When you are finished, notice how much lighter your muscles feel.

### ***Imagery***

Try to visualize a situation that has been calming to you in the past. Imagine, as clearly as you can, doing whatever relaxes you most. You may picture yourself lying on a beach with the sun warming you, hearing the sounds of the waves, and feeling the warm sand. As you imagine this pleasant setting, your tension will decrease and go away.

Or, you might visualize a bright light shining down on you. Imagine that you slowly lift your face and look at the source of the light. Feel the light flood through your body. As the white light fills you, picture your tension as red light leaving your body through your feet.

## Questions?

Please call one of the numbers below if you have questions. Your questions are important.

### **In the first 24 hours after going home:**

Call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Procedural Cardiology Fellow on call to be paged.

### **After the first 24 hours:**

Call your heart doctor or primary health care provider during their regular clinic hours.

### **After hours and on weekends and holidays:**

Call 206-598-6190 and ask for the Procedural Cardiology Fellow on call to be paged.

## To Learn More

Ask your nurse or doctor about questions you have that are not answered in this handout. For instance, you may want to know about when to return to work, or you may have questions about resuming intimacy and sexual activity.

Your doctor can also refer you to a dietitian if you would like help finding foods and an eating plan that will work for you.

Take care, and the best of health to you.

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**MEDICAL CENTER**  
UW Medicine

**Cardiac Diagnostic Services**  
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1959 N.E. Pacific St. Seattle, WA 98195  
206-598-7146