

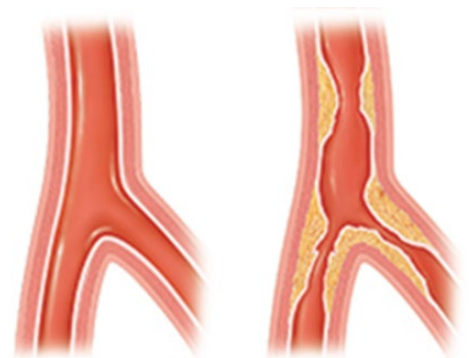
Carotid Angioplasty and Stenting for Atherosclerosis

How to prepare and what to expect

This handout explains carotid angioplasty and stenting for atherosclerosis. It includes how to prepare for this procedure, what to expect, and self-care at home.

What is atherosclerosis?

Atherosclerosis is a disease in the blood vessels (*arteries*) that carry blood from the heart to the rest of the body. The disease causes fatty material called *plaque* to build up on the inner wall of the arteries. This buildup makes it harder for blood to flow through the artery.



A healthy artery

An artery with plaque buildup

What is carotid angioplasty and stenting?

The *carotid artery* is a large artery in your neck. *Carotid angioplasty and stenting* is a treatment for atherosclerosis in this artery. This procedure is done when a carotid artery has gotten very narrow or hard.

For this procedure, your neurosurgeon will widen the artery and place a *stent* (tube) inside it. This will improve blood flow, which may lower your risk for stroke.

How do I prepare?

- You will need to take anti-platelet blood thinners (e.g. aspirin, clopidogrel) before your procedure, and for 6 months or longer after your procedure.
- You will have a pre-surgery visit at the clinic. You will meet with:
 - **Your patient care coordinator** will contact you to schedule pre-op appointments and any needed follow-up appointments, depending on your care team.
 - **A nurse** will give you information on how to prepare for your procedure and what to expect afterwards.
 - **A pre-anesthesia nurse** will talk with you about medications and other safety details to help you prepare for anesthesia.
 - **The Neurosurgery Team** will make sure all your questions are answered and will get your informed consent.



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of this handout.

Day Before Your Surgery

- During your pre-op appointments we will give you detailed instructions on when to stop eating and drinking and what medications to stop taking, if needed.
- Starting **2 hours** before you arrive at the hospital, do **not** eat or drink anything, unless your doctor or nurse gives you different instructions.
- If you must take medicines, take them with only a small sip of water.

Day of Your Procedure

At the Hospital

- Check into Surgery on the Ground Floor of the Maleng Building or the Angio Suites in the Main Hospital. We will give you directions on where to check in during your pre-op appointments.
- A nurse will greet you and help you get ready for your procedure.
- A staff member will take you on a stretcher to meet the Anesthesia Team.
- The Neurosurgery Team will review the consent forms with you, and you will sign them if you have not already done so.
- We will place an *intravenous* (IV) line in a vein in your arm.
- You will get a *sedative* (medicine to make you relax) through the IV.
- We will take you into the operating room.

The Procedure

- This procedure is often done under *twilight anesthesia*, where you are awake but with IV medications to keep you relaxed. Sometimes, general anesthesia is needed, and you will be asleep for the entire procedure.
- You may have a thin tube called a *Foley catheter* placed in your bladder. This tube will drain urine from your bladder during and after surgery.
- We will insert a small plastic catheter into your *femoral artery* (blood vessel in your thigh), or your radial artery (blood vessel in your right wrist). We will take X-ray images while we move the catheter to your carotid artery.
- We will inject contrast through the catheter and into each artery. We will take X-rays to help us see your carotid artery and your *cerebral vessels* (blood vessels in your brain).
- We will move the catheter to your narrowed carotid artery. A balloon at the end of the catheter will fill with air to widen your artery. Then we will place the stent.
- The procedure will last about 1 to 2 hours.

After Your Procedure

- We will bring you back to the recovery area. Your friends and family can visit you there.
- **If we use the artery in your thigh:** You must lie flat on your back up to 6 hours after your procedure. The length of time will depend on the device or method used during your procedure. After you're cleared, the nurses will help you get up and walk around the unit.
- **If we use the artery in your wrist:** You'll wear a pressure device on your wrist for about 2 hours after the procedure. During that time, you should limit use of that hand, but you'll be able to get up and walk right away.
- During this time, your nurses will:
 - Monitor you closely
 - Tilt your bed so you can eat
 - Help you change position if you are not comfortable
 - Check your vital signs and level of awareness
 - Check your procedure site every hour
- Most patients stay in the hospital for 1 night after this procedure.
- When you are discharged to go home, you **must** have a responsible adult with you. This adult may drive you, or may ride with you in a bus or taxi.

Follow-up Care

You will have follow-up tests in the months after your procedure. These are very important exams that show your neurosurgeon how your treatment is working. Your neurosurgeon will talk with you about any other tests or treatments you may need.

After Your Procedure

- The medicine given to you for the procedure can affect your judgment. **For 24 hours**, do **not** drink alcohol, drive, be responsible for the care of another person, use machinery, sign legal documents, or make important decisions.
- You may remove the dressing after 24 hours and take a shower.
- For mild to moderate pain, you may take *non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs* (NSAIDs) such as ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) or naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn). You may take acetaminophen (Tylenol) as well. Follow dose instructions on the bottle.

Activity Instructions

- Do **not** do any strenuous activity (anything that increases your heart rate or makes you breathe hard).
- Do **not** take baths or submerge the puncture site in water for 5 days.
- **If we use the artery in your thigh:** Do **not** do any deep knee bending. Do **not** lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. (A gallon of milk weighs almost 9 pounds.)

- **If we use the artery in your wrist:** Do **not** lift more than 1 pound with affected arm for 2 days.
- Walk often to speed up your recovery. It is OK to walk up and down stairs.

What to Expect

After this procedure, it is normal to have bruising and tenderness in the catheter area. This should go away after a few days.

When to Call 911

Call 911 **right away** if you:

- Start to bleed at the incision site. Apply constant pressure while you wait for help to arrive.
- Develop a lump at the groin or wrist area.
- Have any stroke-like symptoms such as:
 - Weakness or loss of feeling
 - Problems talking
 - Problems walking
 - Problems seeing
 - Severe headache that starts suddenly

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

- To speak with a clinic nurse weekdays from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m., call 206.744.9300 and press 2.
- After hours and on weekends and holidays, call the UW Medicine Nurse Line (24-hour nurse) at 206.520.7500.