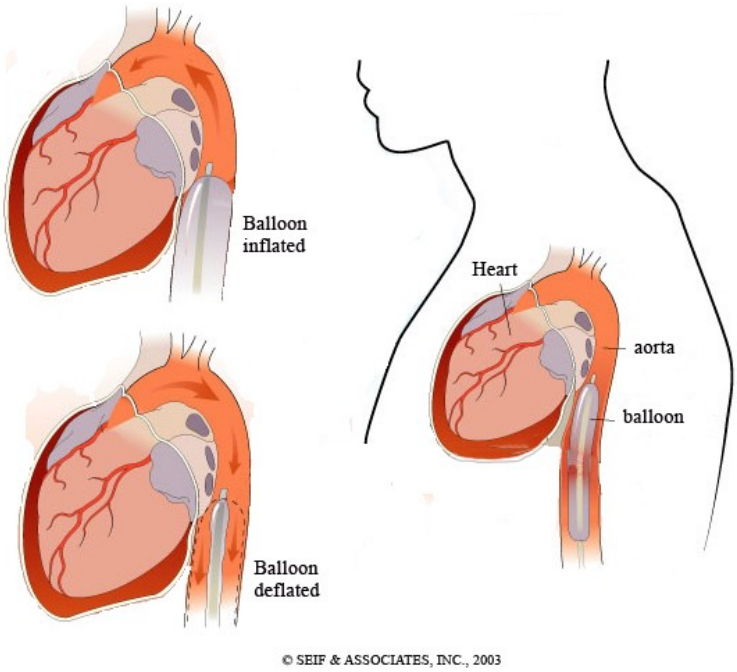
Intra-Aortic Balloon Pump, IABP

An intra-aortic balloon pump or IABP, is a mechanical assist device that helps improve blood flow to the heart and other body organs. An IABP can help the heart heal because the heart does not have to work as hard to pump blood throughout the body. An IABP is used for critically ill people who need temporary support because of various heart problems. For example, an IABP may be used:

- After a severe heart attack.
- In heart shock (*Cardiogenic shock*).
- After open heart surgery.
- In heart failure.



HOW AN INTRA-AORTIC BALLOON PUMP WORKS

The IABP is a long tube (*catheter*) with a balloon tip. The catheter is inserted into an artery in the groin. It is then threaded up the artery until the balloon reaches the *aorta* (The *aorta* is the main artery leading away from the heart). The catheter is then attached to a machine that inflates and deflates the balloon. The pumping action of the balloon helps increase blood flow to the heart and other body organs. Because the balloon helps circulate blood, the workload of the heart is decreased.

INTRA-AORTIC BALLOON PUMP SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

- An anti-clotting (*anticoagulant*) medicine may be used to help thin the blood when an IABP is used.
- Frequent blood draws will be needed to monitor laboratory values.
- A person who has an IABP must stay in bed.
- The head of bed can only be raised slightly so the catheter in the groin does not kink.
- The leg with the catheter must be kept straight at all times. This prevents the catheter from kinking in the groin so the balloon pump works correctly.
- As the heart gets stronger, the IABP is gradually weaned. The IABP is taken out when the heart does not need the support of the balloon pump. Most people need an IABP for only a few days.
- An IABP cannot be used for every patient. Certain medical conditions may prevent the use of an IABP.

INTRA-AORTIC BALLOON PUMP COMPLICATIONS

- An IABP can have risks. Some of these risks include:
  - Decreased blood supply (*ischemia*) to the lower legs.
  - Bleeding or oozing around the catheter insertion site.
  - Infection.
  - Aortic tear.
  - Blood clots.
  - Balloon leak or rupture.
  - Decreased blood supply to the abdominal organs.

Document Released: 03/16/2010
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