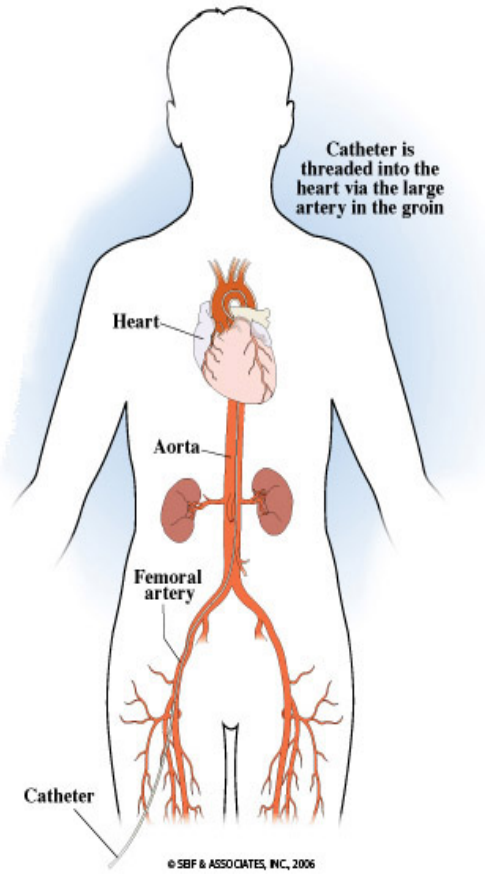
Angioplasty

Angioplasty is a procedure to widen a narrow blood vessel. The procedure is usually done on the blood vessels of the heart (*coronary arteries*) but may help vessels to other parts of the body such as the legs. When a vessel in the heart becomes partially blocked it decreases blood flow to that area. This may lead to chest pain or a heart attack (*myocardial infarction*).

Angioplasty may be done after a procedure that found a problem or as an emergency to treat a heart attack by opening the blocked arteries. The arteries are usually blocked by cholesterol buildup (*plaque*) in the lining or walls.



COMPLICATIONS:

- Damage to the heart.
- A blockage may return.
- Bleeding at the site.
- Blood clot to another part of the body.

PROCEDURE:

1. You may be given a medication to help you relax before and during the procedure through an IV in your hand or arm.
2. A local anesthetic to make the area numb may be used before inserting the *catheter* (a long, hollow tube about the size of a piece of cooked spaghetti).
3. You will be prepared for the procedure by washing and shaving the area where the catheter will be inserted. This is usually done in the groin.
4. A specially trained doctor will insert the catheter with a guide wire into an artery. This is guided under a special type of x-ray (*fluoroscopy*) to the opening of the blocked artery.
5. Special dye is then injected and x-rays are taken.
6. A tiny wire is guided to the blocked spot and a balloon is inflated to make the artery wider. Expanding the balloon crushes the plaque into the wall of the vessel and improves the blood flow.
7. Sometimes the artery may be made wider using a laser or other tools to remove plaque.
8. When the blood flow is better, the balloon is deflated and the catheter is removed.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE:

- You will stay in bed for several hours.
- The access site will be watched and you will be checked frequently.
- Blood tests, x-rays and an EKG may be done.
- You may stay in the hospital overnight for observation.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You develop chest pain, shortness of breath, feel faint, or pass out.
- There is bleeding, swelling, or drainage from the catheter insertion site.
- You develop pain, discoloration, coldness, or severe bruising in the leg or arm that held the catheter.
- You develop bleeding from any other place such as the urine or bowels. This may be bright red blood in urine or stools, or also appear as black, tarry stools.
- An oral temperature above 101° F (38.3° C) develops.

Document Released: 04/07/2004 Document Re-Released: 10/20/2009
ExitCare® Patient Information ©2011 ExitCare, LLC.