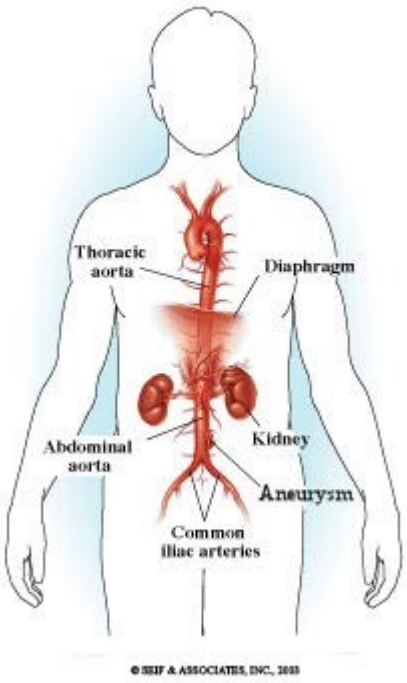
Aortogram

The aorta is the largest blood vessel (*artery*) in the body. To find out what is going on inside this artery, your caregiver can use a procedure called an aortogram. In this procedure, a dye is injected into the aorta. The dye can be seen on an X-ray. This shows how well blood is flowing through the aorta. An aortogram can show if there:

- Are any blockages in the aorta.
- Is a tear in the wall of the aorta (*Aortic dissection*).
- Is a weak spot with widening in the aorta (*Aortic aneurysm*).



BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

- If you take prescription blood-thinners, ask your caregiver if you should stop taking them.
- If you take over-the-counter medications such as aspirin and non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), ask your caregiver if you should stop taking them. Also, if you take vitamin E, consult with your caregiver.
- Do not eat or drink 8 hours before the procedure or as instructed by your caregiver.
- Arrive at least 1 hour before the procedure or as recommended by your caregiver. You will need to fill out paperwork and sign consent forms for the procedure.
- Make arrangements in advance for someone to drive you home after the procedure.

LET YOUR CAREGIVER KNOW ABOUT THE FOLLOWING:

- Health problems such as:
  - Kidney failure.
  - Kidney transplant.
  - Diabetes.
- Allergies to the following:
  - Medications.
  - Contrast dye or iodine.
  - Seafood such as shrimp.
  - Tape.
  - Any food products.
- Medications you are taking, including:
  - Blood thinners (*anticoagulants*), aspirin or other drugs that could affect blood clotting.
  - Steroid medication (by mouth or creams).
  - Any over-the-counter medicines, herbs, eye drops, and creams.
- History of bleeding or blood problems.
- Previous problems with anesthetics, including local anesthetics.
- History of blood clots (*thrombophlebitis*).
- Smoking history.
- If you may be pregnant.

BEFORE THE PROCEDURE

- Preparation:
  - An IV will be started in your hand or arm. Medications such as a sedative and pain medicine will be given through the IV. These will help you relax and decrease pain during the procedure.

- Hair will be removed from your groin area and the site will be cleaned with an antiseptic solution.
- You will be given a *local anesthetic* to your groin area. (this area of your body will be numbed, but you will stay awake).

THE PROCEDURE:

- A specialized physician (*radiologist*) will insert a needle into the artery of your groin. A thin flexible wire will be passed through the needle. Over this wire, a thin tube (*catheter*) will be inserted. The catheter will be threaded up the artery to the aorta. Once the catheter is in the aorta:
  - Dye will be injected into the catheter. You may feel some warmth or a burning sensation when the dye is injected.
  - Once the dye is in your blood vessels, X-ray pictures will be taken. You will be asked to lie still and to hold your breath for a few seconds for each picture.
  - The catheter will be removed after the procedure. Pressure will be applied for up to 20 minutes to close the puncture hole made in your groin. A bandage will be placed over the insertion site.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE

- You will be taken to a recovery room area. Your vital signs (blood pressure, heart rate, breathing) and the insertion site will be monitored.
- You will need to lie flat for about 4 hours after the procedure. Bending your leg that has the groin insertion site can cause bleeding.
- If your blood pressure and heart rate are stable and no bleeding occurs at the insertion site, you may go home the same day as your procedure.
- If complications occur or your caregiver feels you should be watched, you may need to stay in the hospital overnight.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Wait a day before driving a car.
- Do not do any heavy lifting or other types of hard physical work for about a week.
- If you have to cough or sneeze, first put pressure on the puncture site. This protects the wound.
- Resume your home medications as instructed by your caregiver.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicines for pain, discomfort, or fever as directed by your caregiver. Do not take aspirin unless instructed by your caregiver. Aspirin may increase your risk of bleeding at the insertion site.

RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS OF THE PROCEDURE

With any procedure, risks and complications can occur. With an Aortogram, some people may experience:

- Bleeding.
- An allergic reaction to the dye or medications used.
- Swelling or bruising at the groin insertion site.
- Infection.
- Blood clots.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- The insertion site becomes red, swollen or leaks fluid or blood.
- Your pain increases or does not get better with pain medication.
- You have nausea and vomiting.
- You develop a fever of more than 100.5° F (38.1° C).

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Bleeding from the insertion site does not stop. Hold pressure to this area. Call your local emergency service **immediately!**

- If the leg that has the insertion site becomes:
  - Blue.
  - Pale and/or cold.
  - Numb.
- You develop chest pain that is crushing or pressure-like.
- You have difficulty breathing or shortness of breath.
- You faint or pass out.
- You develop a fever of 102.0° F (38.9° C) or higher.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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