

## What is an Angiogram?

An angiogram is a study of selected blood vessels using X-ray technology. Most often, angiograms are done to study arteries, the blood vessels that carry blood away from your heart. Angiography is performed by a doctor called an Interventional Radiologist (IR) in the Department of Radiology. During this test, the IR uses a very small needle, a catheter (a floppy tube the width of a piece of spaghetti), and highly specialized X-ray equipment to take very detailed “pictures” of selected blood vessels. IRs, surgeons, and other specialists use these “pictures” to guide them when they treat a blockage or narrowing that is decreasing the flow of blood to an important part of the body, like your kidneys. Other areas of study include your arms, legs, liver, head, and neck.

### **Special Note:**

**Anticoagulants (blood-thinning medications) must be stopped at least 3 – 4 days before your scheduled angiogram (arteriogram). Examples are Vitamin E and Coumadin (Warfarin). In addition, Diabetes medications such as Glucophage (Metformin) or Glucovance (Glyburide and Metformin) must be stopped 24 hours BEFORE the procedure and restarted 48 hours AFTER the procedure. Please be sure to consult your doctor if you take any of these medications.**

## What Can I Expect While at California Pacific Medical Center?

- Pre-registration is a **two-step** process that you must complete before having a surgery, test, or procedure at California Pacific Medical Center.
  1. **Health History.** Please call **(415) 600-2500** within 1- 2 weeks before your procedure to speak with a Pre-admission Testing nurse who will take your health history, answer your questions, and explain what testing is necessary before your surgery, test, or procedure.  
Based on your health status, the nurse may send you to complete any required testing before you come to the hospital. The nurse will tell you where you can go for your test(s).
  2. **Pre-Registration.** The nurse will connect you to the Patient Access Center to complete the pre-registration process. Please be sure to have your insurance card information ready when you begin.

## What Can I Expect While at California Pacific Medical Center?

*(continued)*

- **Do not eat or drink anything within 6 hours of your angiogram, unless otherwise directed by your doctor.** However, you **may** continue to take your routine medications, such as heart and blood pressure medications, with only a sip of water.
- On the day of your scheduled angiogram, come to the Ambulatory Care Unit, located at 2351 Clay Street, 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, at least 2 hours before your scheduled procedure.
- Parking is available at 2405 Clay Street (cross street is Webster).
- Bring a list of any medications you are taking and your insurance information. You may have blood tests taken if needed.
- An IV (intravenous line) will be placed in your arm. The IV is needed to give you medications during your procedure to help you relax and make sure that you are comfortable.
- In Radiology, the Interventional Radiologist will explain the procedure to you and ask you to sign a consent form stating that you understand the procedure you are having. This is a good time for you to ask questions and to share any concerns you may have.

## During the Procedure

- During the angiogram, you will be placed on monitors that measure your blood pressure, pulse, and oxygen level.
- Next, the IR will: a) inject a small amount of local anesthetic around either the femoral (groin) or brachial (arm) artery, b) insert a small plastic tube into this area, and c) position the tip of the tube in the vessel supplying blood to the area being studied. A liquid, or contrast, is injected through the tube and makes the vessel visible. After the injection, you may feel a warm flush as the contrast travels through your system. This feeling always passes quickly. **Please be sure to let the staff know if you have had a previous allergic reaction to the X-ray contrast.**
- Then, the IR will take X-ray pictures that will record obstructions and narrowings of the arteries under examination. **It is very important to hold still while the X-ray**

**pictures are being taken.** The final results of your test will be given to you by your primary doctor or surgeon later that day or in a follow-up office visit.

**Note: If you have an angioplasty or stent placement during your arteriogram, there is a possibility that you may be admitted to the hospital following your procedure.**

## After the Procedure

Once the procedure is completed, the radiologist removes the catheter and applies pressure to the catheter entry site for 15 – 20 minutes to prevent bleeding. You will return to the ACU on a gurney.

- **In the ACU your nurse will ask you to lie still without bending your leg for 2 to 4 hours after the procedure.**
- In the ACU your nurse will monitor your pulse, blood pressure, and check your arteriogram puncture site for any bleeding or bruising.
- You may eat as soon as you feel up to it.

Before you go home, you will receive specific instructions about your care at home from your doctor and the nursing staff. It is very important to drink fluids at home in order to flush the contrast from your body.

**YOU MAY NOT DRIVE OR TAKE A CAB HOME ALONE.** You may take a cab ONLY if you are accompanied by a responsible adult.

## More Ways to Learn

- Visit the Society of Interventional Radiology Web site at [www.sirweb.org](http://www.sirweb.org), click on "Patients & Public," scroll to the bottom of the page, and click on "Angiography."
- Contact the Cardiac Rehabilitation Program at California Pacific Medical Center by calling (415) 600-3361.

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Question: What is an angiogram?**

**Answer:** An angiogram is a study of selected blood vessels using X-ray technology. Most often, angiograms are done to study arteries, the blood vessels that carry blood away from your heart.

**Question: After your angiogram, how many hours will you need to remain still, without bending your leg?**

**Answer:** Your nurse will ask you to lie still without bending your leg for 2 – 4 hours after the angiogram procedure.

**Question: Can I drive myself home after an angiogram?**

**Answer:** No, you cannot drive yourself home after an angiogram procedure.

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Note: This information is not meant to replace any information or personal medical advice which you get directly from your doctor(s). If you have any questions about this information, such as the risks or benefits of the treatment listed, please ask your doctor(s).