

Departments -> Catheterization

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Heart catheterization consists of inserting a small tube (a catheter) into a vein or artery in the leg. This catheter is then advanced into the heart to measure different pressures and obtain blood samples. This is followed by the injection of a dye that is used to obtain pictures of the heart's anatomy and blood vessels. After this diagnostic and/or therapeutic procedure the catheters are removed. Diagnostic catheterization may be performed in order to better understand your child's heart disease or to determine the optimal timing and type of cardiac surgery required for your child.

During catheterization, a number of interventions may be performed and these will be explained to the family prior to the procedure. These interventions might include treatment of narrowed valves with balloon dilation (valvuloplasty), treatment of narrowed vessels with balloon dilation (angioplasty) or stents, closure of abnormal connecting vessels with coils, or closure of abnormal defects with devices.

If your child is scheduled for a catheterization please follow these instructions:

- After midnight on the night prior to the procedure, your child should not have any solid food or milk.
- Your child will be able to drink clear liquids until three hours before the procedure, after which time he/she must not have anything to eat or drink at all.
- You will be notified by mail or phone of exact feeding restrictions and medication instructions.

What to expect

When you arrive, your child will be taken to the preoperative holding area where you will speak with a cardiologist. Your child will then be taken to the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory on the 2nd floor of Children's Hospital and Research Center at Oakland. You can accompany your child as far as the doors of the Laboratory.

An anesthesiologist will place an intravenous line and give sedation medication. This keeps your child lightly asleep so that he/she is not afraid and experiences no pain during the procedure. Based on the anesthesiologist's assessment, general anesthesia may be required. This possibility will be discussed with you prior to the procedure.

The procedure generally lasts from two to four hours, during which time you can wait in the 4th floor waiting room or carry a hospital assigned pager. Afterwards your child will spend about one hour in the recovery room, and then will be admitted to the ward for four to six hours or rarely overnight for observation. You will have a conference with the cardiologist shortly after the procedure is completed to discuss results.

After the procedure, there may be some bruising in the leg for around one week. Irritation such as rubbing of clothes may cause small drops of blood over the catheterization site. This requires no special treatment. **Flow of blood from the site is abnormal. If this should happen stop the flow with direct pressure at the site and call the cardiologist immediately.**

Your child may resume all regular activities, including bathing and swimming, two days after discharge.

Call your cardiologist if:

- There is any persistent bleeding from the site.
- Local discomfort persists for more than 1-2 days.
- Any color change (pale or blue color) occurs in the leg.
- Increased redness, swelling, or discharge occurs at the site.
- If your child has a fever.
- If you have any other questions or concerns.



Disclaimer: The information provided here is intended to educate the reader about certain medical conditions and certain possible treatment. It is not a substitute for examination, diagnosis, and medical care provided by a licensed and qualified health professional. If you believe you, your child, or someone you know, suffer from the conditions described herein, please see your health care provider immediately. Do not attempt to treat yourself, your child or anyone else without proper medical supervision.

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