

About Cardiac Catheterization

1. Cardiac catheterization is an advanced, safe, effective but invasive medical procedure used to diagnose certain cardiovascular diseases.
2. The most common purpose for performing cardiac catheterization is to find out if a patient's coronary artery has become constricted (angina) or if it is completely blocked (myocardial infarction). A balloon catheter can be used to widen the narrow area. A small stainless metal scaffold, called a stent, can also be used to keep blood vessel open.
3. A flexible catheter is put into a blood vessel (femoral artery, femoral vein or radial artery at the wrist) and treaded to the heart. The catheter can measure the pressure of the cardiac chamber and check the level of oxygen in the blood by drawing a little blood (0.5c.c.) for a blood test
4. A special dye can be put into the catheter and injected into the cardiac chambers to make the inside of the chambers or coronary artery show up clearly on x rays, in order to check the functions of the chambers and the valves, or to check if the coronary artery is blocked, or if the structure of the heart is normal.
5. Risk of performing cardiac catheterization: The risk is rather low, less than 0.1% (similar to the rate of having an airplane or car accident). The risk is a little higher (1%) when Percutaneous Transluminal Coronary Angioplasty or Stent is performed, but it is still far lower than the risk of general surgery (5% - 10%). Generally, the procedure does not cause pain, except for a little pain when an injection of subcutaneous local anesthesia is given. The whole procedure takes about one hour, including time for hemostasis. 3-4 days of hospital stay are required.
6. For any further inquiry, please contact the Cardiovascular Clinic.
Thank you!