



Going home after Cardiac Catheterization (Radial Approach)

You have had a cardiac catheterization procedure through your wrist (radial approach). This handout will help you learn how to care for yourself at home. Please read this information before you go home.

Care of the puncture site

- Your puncture site will be covered with a bandage. It can be removed 24 hours after the procedure.
- Check the puncture site every day for signs of infection (e.g. increased redness, swelling, tenderness, drainage, fever).
- You may have a small lump at the puncture site. This is normal. The lump will get smaller and go away over the next 2 to 4 weeks.
- You may have bruising near the puncture site. It may extend up the arm and into the hand. This will go away in the next few weeks.

Bathing

- You may shower after 24 hours. Remove the bandage before showering. You can put on another bandage after your shower, if you wish.
- While standing in the shower, gently clean the site daily with soap and water. Dry the area gently. Do not apply powders or lotions.
- Do not use a hot tub, bath tub or swim for 5 days or until the site has healed.

Activity

- It is normal for the puncture site to be sore and tender for up to 1 week. Tell your doctor if the pain gets worse.

- You can go for easy walks unless your doctor has told you not to.
- Avoid repetitive movements such as typing, computer work, knitting or wringing clothes for 24 hours.
- You may resume sexual activity in 3 days.
- For 4 days after or until the site heals:
 - Rest with your forearm and hand supported on a pillow.
 - Keep your arm above waist level. Avoid dangling your arm.
 - Avoid pushing, pulling or lifting anything over 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms).
- Avoid strenuous exercise such as running, cycling or swimming for 1 week.
- You may drive after 2 days unless you have had a recent heart attack. If so, ask your cardiologist (heart doctor) when you can drive.
- Ask your heart doctor when you can go back to work. It will depend on if you have had a recent heart attack or if you have a physical job.

If you had medication to calm you (sedation) during your procedure, you may be considered impaired for up to 24 hours after. You should plan **not to:**

- Make important decisions or sign documents
- Work with machinery
- Travel alone by public transport e.g. bus, taxi
- Drink alcohol, take sleeping pills or anti-anxiety medication
- Be responsible for the care of another person e.g. baby, small child, person in poor health

Your medications

- If your wrist aches, take acetaminophen (Tylenol® or Tylenol® products) as needed and as per directions on the label.
- Restart all your usual medications unless your doctor tells you not to.
- Fill any new prescriptions and follow directions.

Call 911 if you have:

- Bleeding from the puncture site that you cannot stop by doing the following:

Relax and sit down right away. Keep your wrist straight and apply firm pressure to the site using your fingers and a gauze pad. Keep the pressure on for 20 minutes. Continue this until the bleeding stops. This may take awhile. When bleeding stops, cover the site with a bandage and keep your wrist and arm still for at least 2 hours.

What to do about chest pain:

- You may have some chest discomfort after your procedure. This is not uncommon and can be related to the procedure. It usually passes within 24 hours.
- Chest discomfort should go away with rest and nitroglycerine spray. Use 1 spray every 5 minutes until the discomfort is gone or until you have taken 3 sprays. **Do not take more than 3 sprays in 15 minutes.** If chest discomfort is **not relieved with 3 sprays** of nitroglycerine in 15 minutes, call 911.
- Be sure to tell your cardiologist/specialist if you have frequent episodes of chest discomfort that gets better with nitroglycerine spray.

Call your family doctor or go to the closest Emergency

Department right away if you have:

- Severe pain, swelling, firmness, numbness, tingling, coldness, bluish color to your puncture site or arm.
- A lump at the puncture site that pulsates (throbs). This may be a sign of a problem with the artery. Loosely cover the lump with a bandage but **do not apply pressure**.
- Increased redness or drainage at the puncture site.
- High-grade fever (38.5C/101.3F and over) for 2 days or more.
- Low-grade fever (37.5C-37.9C or 98.5F-101.2F) for more than 3 days.

For non-emergency health information and services:

HealthLinkBC -Health advice you can trust 24/7.

Tel: 8.1.1 from anywhere in BC.

Tel: 7.1.1 for deaf and hearing-impaired assistance (TTY)

Web: www.HealthLinkBC.ca

Follow-up

Your cardiologist will give you written information about your follow-up appointments.

The information in this handout is intended only for the person it was given to by the health care team. It does not replace the advice or directions given to you by your doctor.