

## Patient information factsheet

# Urgent treatment for a heart attack

## Information for relatives and friends

**Your relative or friend has been urgently referred for a cardiac catheterisation (also known as an angiography).**

This is an emergency investigation to see if there is a blood clot blocking one of their major coronary arteries. These arteries are located on the outside of the heart and supply blood to the heart muscle. To reduce the injury to the heart muscle, it is important to open the artery, to enable blood to flow to the heart muscle.

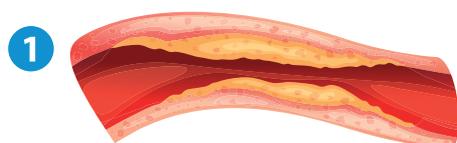
This procedure does carry some risks, but there are also risks if your relative or friend does not have the procedure. It is better for your relative or friend to have this procedure, than not to have it.

### What happens in a cardiac catheterisation?

When your relative or friend is taken to the cardiac catheter lab, they will be made comfortable on the procedure table and given a sedative to enable them to feel relaxed. They will be monitored closely throughout the procedure, and given pain relief if required. The consultant will give them a local anaesthetic to numb the area and then insert a catheter (small tube) via the right wrist, or the right side of the groin. The catheter is fed up towards the heart. You can see the two catheter entry points marked on the diagram on the right:

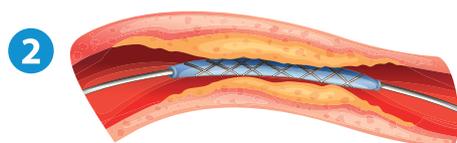
Once the catheter reaches the heart, the consultant will flush dye through the arteries. Using x-rays, they will identify any narrowing or blockage that needs treating.

The consultant will inflate a balloon to open the artery and then place a stent into the coronary artery, if there is a need to do so. This will keep the artery open. The stent will be left in the artery permanently.



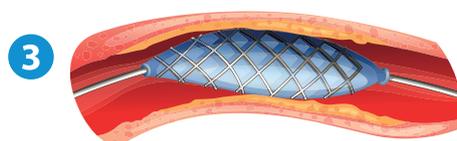
1

Build up of cholesterol partially blocking blood flow through the artery.



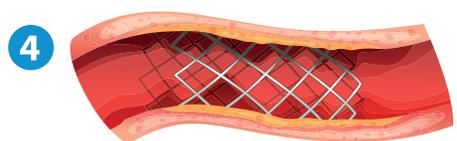
2

Stent with balloon inserted into partially blocked artery.



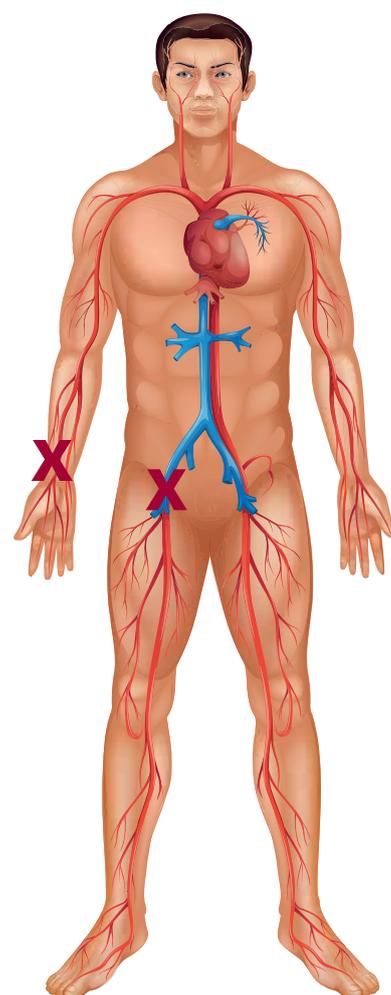
3

Balloon inflated to expand stent.



4

Balloon removed from expanded stent.



## Supporting your relative or friend

While your relative or friend is having this procedure, you may be asked to wait in the emergency department, until a member of staff can take you to the ward (usually the coronary care unit). If you need to leave the area you were asked to wait in, please let a member of staff know where you are going and leave a mobile number, so that we can contact you.

The acute coronary syndrome nurse is aware that you are waiting for your relative or friend. They will update you about the procedure and how your relative or friend is doing.

The procedure can take 30 minutes to two hours, depending on the individual and the amount of blockage to the artery. Once the procedure has finished, your relative or friend will be taken to the coronary care unit or cardiac high dependency unit to be monitored. The staff will settle them into the ward and, once observations have been completed, you will be able to see them.

Coronary care unit  
Telephone: **023 8120 8570**

**If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audiotape, please telephone 023 8120 4688 for help.**