

Patient information factsheet

Cerebral angiography

We have given you this factsheet because you have been referred for a procedure called cerebral angiography. It explains what cerebral angiography is, what the procedure involves and how to prepare for it. We hope it will help to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us using the details at the end of this factsheet.

What is cerebral angiography?

Angiography is a type of x-ray test used to produce pictures of blood vessels. These pictures are known as angiograms. A cerebral angiogram shows the blood vessels in your head and neck.

Preparing for the procedure

We may ask you to attend a clinic appointment before the procedure so that we can discuss it with you. During this appointment, you will have a blood test.

Please inform the pre-assessment nurse if you have any allergies.

Before your procedure

Contact us before your procedure using the telephone number included at the end of this factsheet if you are:

- pregnant, trying to get pregnant, or there is a chance that you are pregnant
- taking any anticoagulant medications (see medications section on page 2)

This is very important, because if either of these apply to you and you don't let us know in advance, we may need to delay or cancel your procedure on the day.

On the day of your procedure

Before you arrive

You may have a light breakfast (such as tea or coffee and toast) **before 7am** on the morning of your procedure. You can drink clear fluids up until the time of your procedure. Please bring a dressing gown and slippers with you to the hospital.

We advise you not to use public transport after you've had an angiogram in case you feel unwell, so it's important that you arrange for someone to collect you from the ward and take you home by car.

You will need someone to stay with you for 24 hours after you get home. Remember to arrange this in advance.

When you arrive on the ward

The ward staff will make you comfortable and may need to take your blood before your procedure. Please inform them if you have any allergies.

A doctor will see you to explain the procedure and ask you to sign a consent form.

Shortly before you are due to go down for the procedure, the ward staff will ask you to change into a hospital gown and remove your underwear. You should use the toilet beforehand as the procedure will take at least one hour.

Medication

You can take your normal medication with a small glass of water. Please take all your medication as usual unless instructed otherwise (this includes any aspirin-based or anti-platelet medication, for example clopidogrel).

Please contact us before your procedure using the telephone number included at the end of this factsheet if you are taking any anticoagulant medications, such as:

- warfarin
- rivaroxaban

These medications can increase your risk of bleeding during the procedure and it's essential we discuss this with you in advance.

Are there any risks involved?

As with any procedure there is a risk of complication, which includes a very small risk of stroke and damage to the blood vessels in the leg or arm. This will be explained in more detail before you are asked to give consent for the angiography. If you have any questions, you can ask the medical or nursing staff caring for you at the time.

During your procedure, x-rays will be used to see inside your body. The procedure cannot be done without x-rays. All x-rays use ionising radiation which increases your risk of cancer, but for this examination the risk is low.

Your doctor has decided that the benefit to you from the procedure outweighs the low risk from the radiation. You will not be exposed to any more x-rays than is absolutely necessary.

During the procedure

The test is carried out in the radiology department. There will usually be at least three people in the room during the procedure: a doctor (radiologist), a radiographer and a nurse.

We will ask you to lie on the x-ray table. The nurse will put sterile drapes over you and clean and shave an area of your groin or wrist.

The x-ray machines will then move into position over your head. They will move around you during the procedure but will not touch you. The doctor will inject a local anaesthetic into your groin or wrist – this will sting but the area will then go numb. You may feel some pushing or pressure as the doctor inserts a small plastic tube (catheter) into the blood vessel in your groin (femoral artery) or wrist (radial artery), but this should not be painful. The doctor will then pass the catheter through other blood vessels in your body until it reaches your neck. You will not feel it moving inside you.

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The doctor will position the catheter into different blood vessels in your neck and inject a special dye (contrast medium) through the catheter so that the blood vessels in your brain show up on our x-ray machines.

The contrast medium may give you a brief, intense hot feeling in your head. You may also experience a metal taste in your mouth or see flashing lights. This is normal and will pass within a few seconds.

It is very important you stay still throughout the procedure to ensure the pictures taken are as clear as possible.

If you feel unwell at any point, please let us know. You can talk to us during the procedure if there are any problems.

After the procedure

When all the information has been collected, we will remove the catheter in your groin or wrist and press on the area for up to ten minutes to seal it and stop any bleeding.

The nurse will place dry swabs over the incision site and will ask you to press on these while we transfer you back to your bed on the ward.

On the ward

If you had your procedure through your groin, you will need to lie flat for two hours, making sure you keep your head on the pillow and your leg straight.

After this time, you can sit up for another two hours, giving you a total of four hours bed rest.

If you are going to laugh, cough or sneeze, you must put firm pressure on the swabs to protect the artery.

If you had your procedure through your wrist, you will need to stay on the ward for four hours for observation.

If you feel the wound site is bleeding, press down straight away and call the nursing staff.

The nursing staff will carry out regular observations, including checking your groin or wrist site and foot pulses. You should be able to eat and drink on returning to the ward, but please check with nursing staff first.

Sometimes people experience some bruising around the groin or wrist. This is nothing to worry about and will fade over a few days.

At home

Make sure you rest your arm or leg so that the wound site can heal. Avoid activities that may strain the top of your leg or arm, such as lifting, running and cycling for the next two to three days. Do not operate machinery or drive for 48 hours.

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Results

Sometimes the doctor will be able to give you an initial impression of the x-rays after the procedure. They will then need to check all the images carefully before making a final report, which could take several weeks. A copy of the results will be sent to your general practitioner (GP) and the consultant looking after you.

Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

Neurovascular nurse specialist

Telephone: **023 8120 8428** (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm)

Outside of these hours, contact the NHS **111** service.

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**