



Advice for patients following angioplasty/stent procedures

Information for patients from the East Kent Vascular Unit

What is angioplasty?

Angioplasty is a minimally invasive x-ray procedure using wires and balloons inserted via a needle to treat arteries which have become narrowed or blocked. This may include leaving a stent behind to support a treated artery. Stents are small, strong, expandable tubes made of metal mesh designed to help keep a diseased artery open.

What complications can occur from having the procedure?

The potential benefits and risks of angioplasty/stent are covered in the information leaflet about these procedures and will have been explained to you by your interventional radiologist before the treatment but the complications include the following.

- Bruising where the artery was punctured, this is common and harmless.
- Bleeding from the puncture causing blood to collect around the artery (haematoma). If this becomes large, a small operation may be needed to stitch the needle hole in the artery. This is needed in less than one in 100 patients.
- The artery may immediately block which could lead to loss of blood supply to the limb. Although rare, this may result in amputation for around one in 200 patients.
- The artery may be punctured by the wires used or rupture where the balloon is inflated. It may be possible to repair the artery with a stent or you may need an operation, but only in around one in 1000 patients.
- During the procedure, fragments of the material furring up the arteries (atheroma, plaque) may be dislodged and pass along in the bloodstream causing a blockage further down (embolism). It is more common after procedures further down the leg. For one in 500, this may need an operation to attempt to remove the new blockage or lead to amputation.
- The x-ray dye can cause an allergic reaction with a rash or breathing difficulties. Medication may be needed to control this reaction and you will need to remember to tell us of this whenever future x-rays are needed because repeated allergic reactions can be life-threatening.



What happens after my procedure?

After your treatment you will be asked to lie flat for some time depending on your exact procedure. You will be advised about this at the time. Do ask for pain relief if you are sore.

How long will I need to stay in hospital?

Once up and about, you may be able to go home provided any anaesthetic has worn off and you are not staying for further treatment.

Will I need a follow-up appointment?

Your radiologist will discuss the results of your treatment with you before you go home. A letter (discharge summary) will be sent to your GP with details of the treatment and any future care plans. Whether you need to be seen again depends on whether more treatment is planned, commonly not.

When can I drive again?

Please do not drive for 24 hours after your procedure and avoid strenuous activities for three days.

What if I feel unwell at home?

Contact us using the numbers on the following page if a swelling appears in your groin or your leg symptoms worsen.

How can I help my recovery?

This treatment will usually improve the blood flow through your treated area but will not cure the underlying arterial disease. Arteries often become narrow again so it is important to follow the advice that you will have already been given about how you can help yourself to avoid more problems with hardening and blockage of your arteries. This advice is given again below.

- Avoid tobacco, both passive smoke and do not smoke yourself
- Eat a healthy, low fat diet and lose weight if relevant
- Take regular exercise, aiming for a decent walk at least five days a week; look after your feet
- Make sure that underlying diabetes, high blood pressure, or high cholesterol are properly treated and controlled, these are usually managed with the help of your GP
- Take the medicines which protect you from arterial disease, including antiplatelet drugs (aspirin or clopidogrel) and cholesterol-lowering drugs (statins, fibrates, or ezetimibe).

Where can I get more information?

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact one of the following: during the working day, first try the vascular nurse or, if unable to get through or out of hours ask the hospital switchboard for the vascular registrar on call.

- Vascular Nurse Practitioners, K&C Telephone: 01227 864137 (in working hours)
Email: ekh-tr.vascular-nurse@nhs.net
- Kent and Canterbury Hospital (K&C) Telephone: 01227 766877
(out of hours for Registrar on call)
- Radiology secretaries Telephone: 01227 864023 or 01227 783181
- Kent (Vascular) Ward, K&C Telephone: 01227 783102

This leaflet has been produced with and for patients

If you would like this information in **another language, audio, Braille, Easy Read, or large print** please ask a member of staff.

Any complaints, comments, concerns, or compliments please speak to your doctor or nurse, or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) on 01227 783145, or email ekh-tr.pals@nhs.net

Further patient leaflets are available via the East Kent Hospitals web site www.ekhufft.nhs.uk/patientinformation