

TREAT HEART DISEASE

Common tests and treatments for heart disease





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Patients and Families

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Common Tests and Treatments for Heart Disease

For people living with heart disease and their caregivers

Read this booklet to know:

- Common heart tests
- What to expect during the tests
- Common treatment options
- What to expect during treatment

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Common Medical Tests for Heart Disease

Electrocardiogram (ECG)

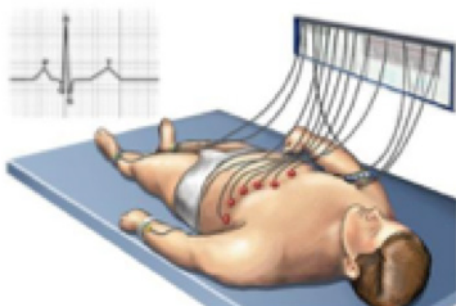
What is an electrocardiogram for?

An electrocardiogram (ECG) measures the electrical activity in your heart.

By looking at the pattern of electrical activity in your heart, your doctor can:

- Know if your heart rhythm is normal (or not normal)
- See if your heart is damaged from a lack of oxygen or a heart attack

What happens during an electrocardiogram?



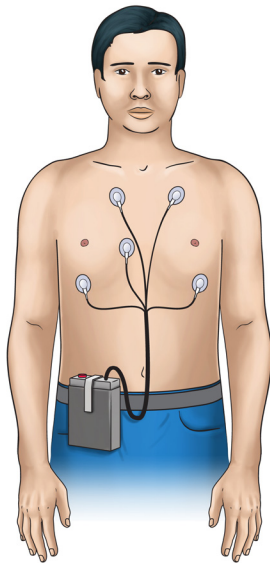
For this test, you will be asked to lie on an exam bed. A healthcare worker places sticky patches (electrodes) on your chest, legs and arms. These patches are attached to wires that connect to a machine.

Holter monitor

What is a holter monitor for?

A holter monitor tracks your heart rate and rhythm over several hours. Your doctor may send you for this test if your heart is beating too slow, too fast or too early.

What happens while I am wearing a holter monitor?



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For this test, a healthcare worker will place sticky patches (electrodes) on your skin. These patches are attached to wires that connect to a small machine. This is the same test as described in the section on electrocardiogram (ECG), only you wear this device for 24 hours. The holter monitor test is painless and you can move around as you would on a normal day.

Exercise stress test

What is an exercise stress test for?

An exercise stress test can be used to diagnose coronary artery disease. It can also be used to see how much exercise you can do safely.

What happens during an exercise stress test?

You may complete this test if you have been told you may have coronary artery disease. During an exercise stress test, you will walk on a treadmill or cycle on a stationary bike. Your heart rate and rhythm will be tracked by an electrocardiogram (ECG) while you exercise.

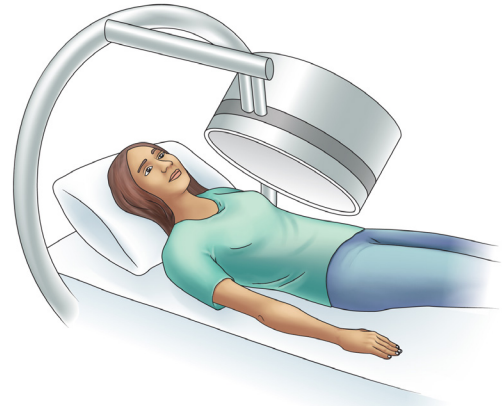


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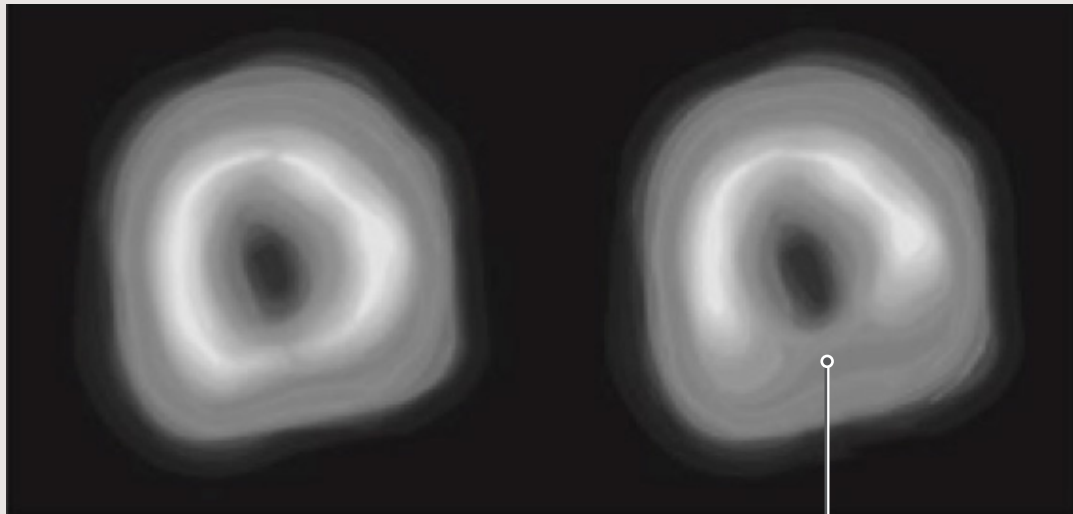
Nuclear stress test

What is a nuclear stress test for?

A nuclear stress test shows if you are getting enough blood and oxygen to your heart muscle and if/where your heart was damaged from a heart attack.



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AREA WITH LESS BLOOD FLOW

Picture of a heart before exercise. The white line shows the blood that has travelled to the heart. This picture shows that enough blood and oxygen travelled to all parts of the heart.

Picture of a heart after exercise. There is no white line here. This picture shows that there is less blood and oxygen at this part of the heart.

What happens during a nuclear stress test?

For this test, a healthcare worker will add a small amount of a radioactive substance to your blood. The substance travels in your blood to your heart. A special camera that can see the substance will show how much blood is getting to your heart.

You may have to do this test before and after you complete an exercise (or drug) stress test.

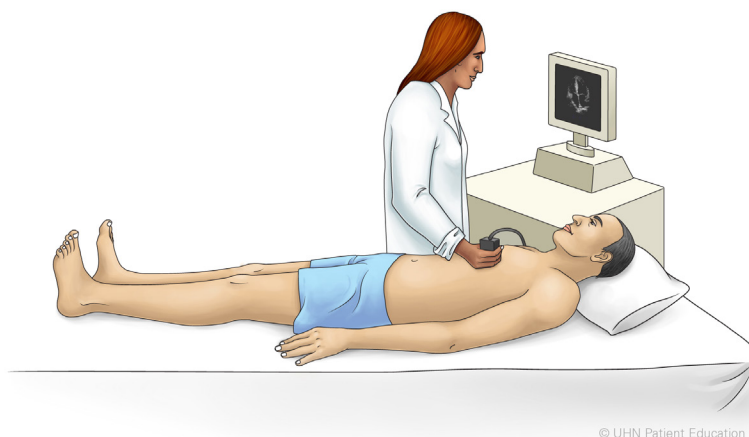
Echocardiogram (echo)

What is an echocardiogram for?

An echocardiogram uses sound waves (ultrasound) to create a picture of your heart. Your doctor will be able to see the shape of your heart, how your heart pumps and empties, and how the walls, chambers and valves move.

What happens during an echocardiogram?

For this test, you will be asked to lie on an exam bed. A healthcare provider moves a wand (transducer) over your chest.



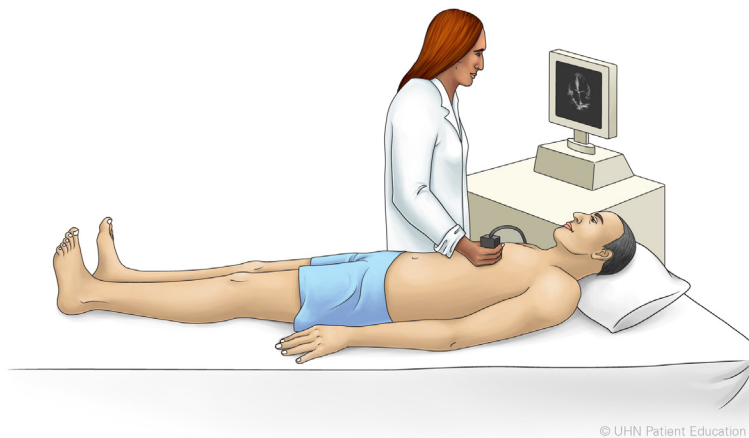
Stress echocardiogram (stress echo)

What is a stress echocardiogram for?

A stress echocardiogram will show if any parts of your heart do not get enough blood and oxygen while you exercise.

What happens during a stress echo test?

For this test, you will complete an echocardiogram (as described above). This test is completed at rest and again after exercise. An echocardiogram uses sound waves (ultrasound) to create a picture of your heart. Your doctor will be able to see the shape of your heart, how your heart pumps and empties and how the walls, chambers and valves move. Your doctor will be able to see if any areas of your heart have poor blood flow.



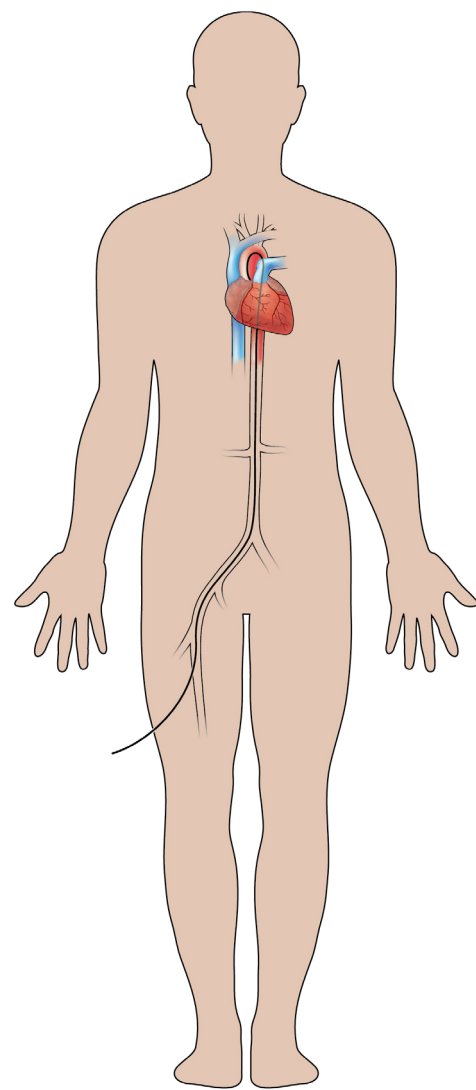
Angiogram (angio or cath)

What is an angiogram for?

An angiogram will show how much your coronary arteries are narrowed or blocked by plaque.

What happens during an angiogram?

For this test, a doctor will insert a thin tube (called a catheter) into a blood vessel in your groin (femoral artery) or wrist (radial artery). The tube is pushed up to the coronary arteries in your heart. Next, a doctor will add a special dye into the tube and watch the dye move into your coronary arteries.



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Common Treatments for Heart Disease

TREATMENTS FOR CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE

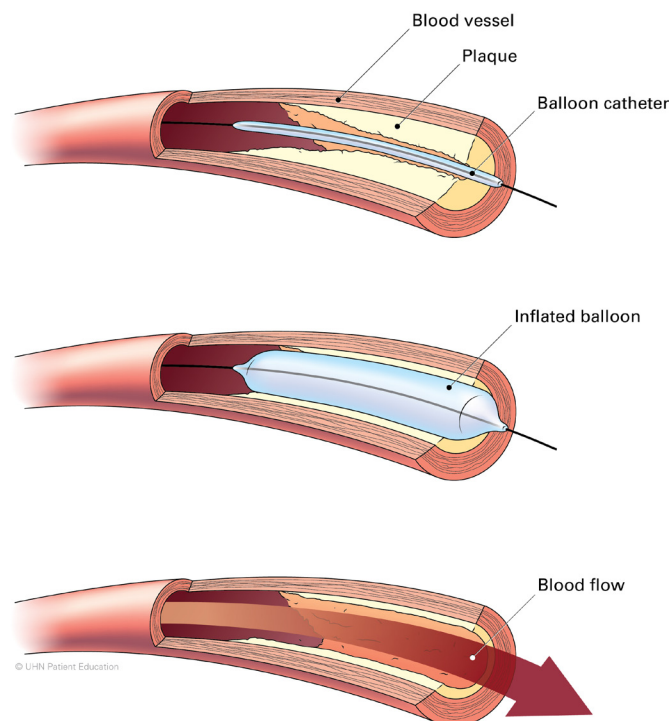
Angioplasty

What is an angioplasty?

Angioplasty (also known as percutaneous coronary intervention) is a treatment used to widen your artery that is narrowed or blocked by plaque.

How does it work?

For this treatment, a doctor inserts a thin tube (called a catheter) into the narrowed or blocked coronary artery. The doctor inflates a small balloon, found at the end of the catheter. As the balloon gets bigger, it presses the plaque into the wall of your artery and opens the artery so blood can flow easily.



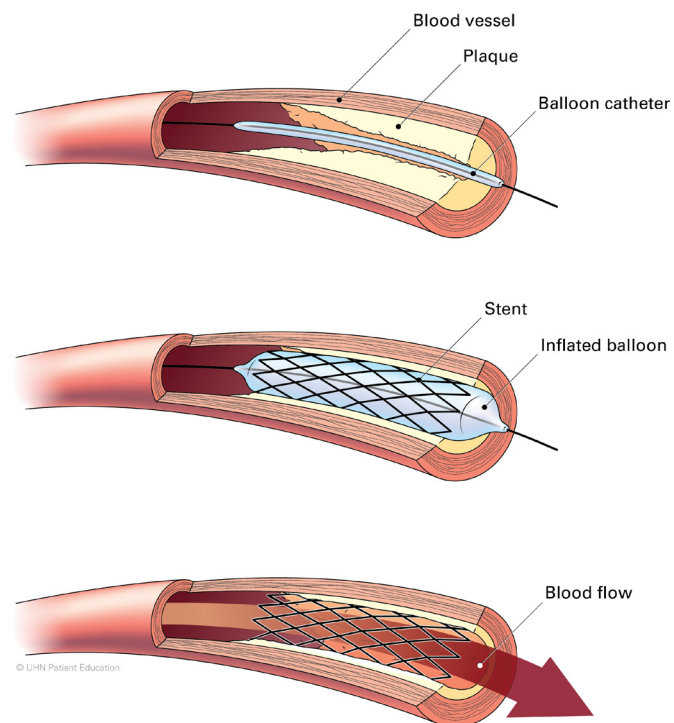
Angioplasty with stent

What is an angioplasty with stent?

An angioplasty with stent follows the same steps as described in the section on angioplasty (percutaneous coronary intervention), but includes a stent.

How does it work?

A stent is a mesh tube that is placed in a narrowed artery to hold it open. In this treatment option, the balloon presses the stent against the wall of your artery. The catheter with the balloon is taken out of your artery and the stent remains to hold your artery open so blood can flow easily.



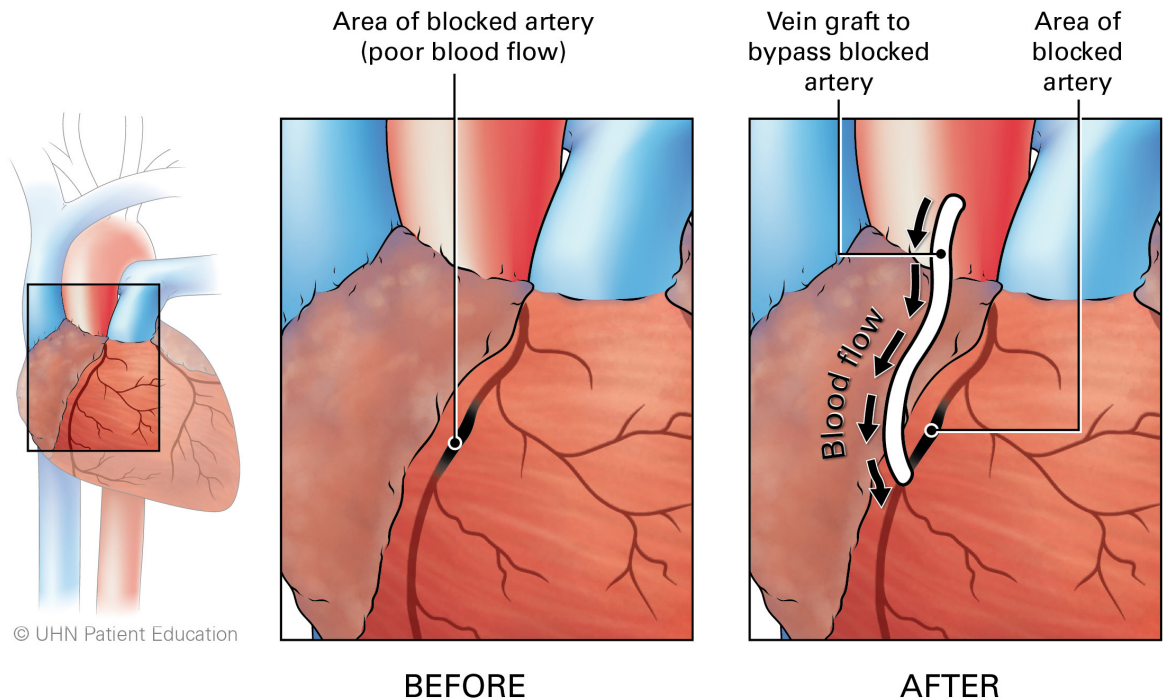
Coronary artery bypass graft surgery

What is a coronary artery bypass graft surgery (CABG)?

Coronary artery bypass graft surgery is a treatment that allows more blood and oxygen to get to your heart.

What happens during a CABG?

In this treatment, a surgeon takes a section of a healthy blood vessel from your leg, arm or chest and connects (grafts) it to your blocked coronary artery. The healthy blood vessel allows blood to take a new path (bypass) around the blockage.



Heart medicines

What are some common coronary artery disease medicines?

Many people who have coronary artery disease are prescribed cardiac medicines.

Common cardiac medicines include:

- Anti-platelets, aspirin
- Beta blockers
- Cholesterol lowering agents
- ACE inhibitors
- Nitrates

Read the booklet titled, Taking Your Heart Medicines for more information.

Exercise

How will exercise help me?

Doing regular exercise will decrease the chance that your coronary artery disease will get worse. Do aerobic exercise and resistance training as prescribed by your Cardiac Rehab team.

Read the booklet titled, Staying Active for a Healthy Heart for more information.

TREATMENTS FOR HEART FAILURE

What are some common treatments for heart failure?

Treatments for heart failure include:

- Medicine
- Surgery
- Healthy lifestyle (lower sodium and water intake, regular exercise)

Talk to your doctor to understand:

- Your medicines
- How much fluid you can drink
- When you should call your doctor or get medical help right away
- What type of surgery is available to you

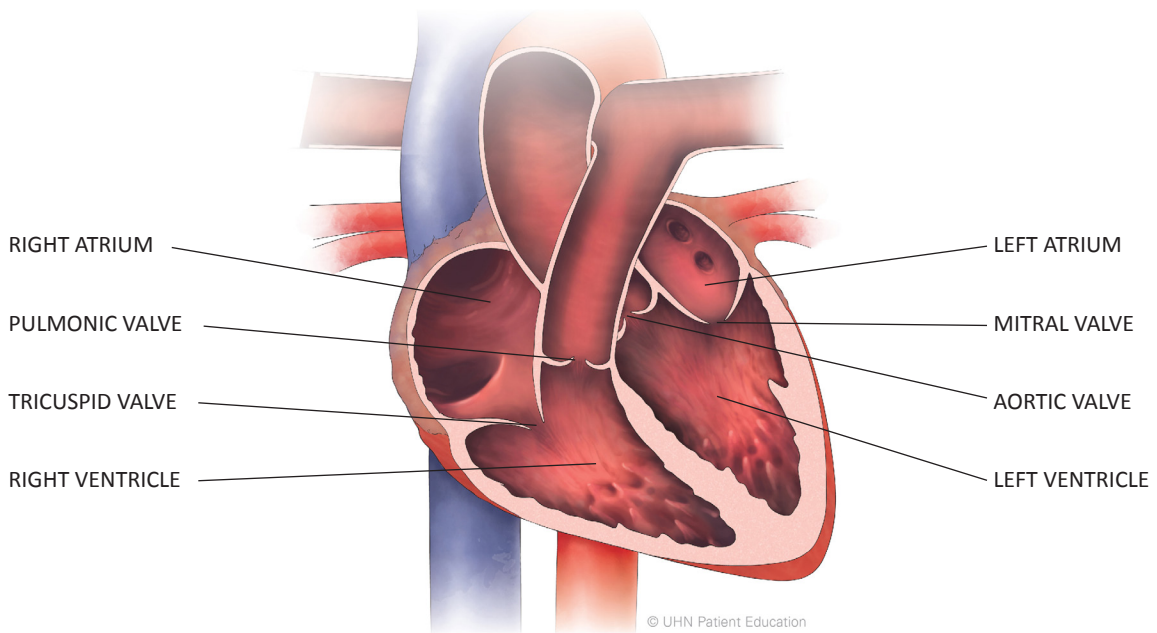
Talk to your Cardiac Rehab team to understand:

- How to exercise safely
- How to lower the amount of salt (sodium) in your diet

TREATMENTS FOR HEART VALVE PROBLEMS

What are common treatments for heart valve problems?

If your valve problem is severe, you may require surgery to repair or replace your valve.



Where to Learn More

Cardiac College
www.cardiaccollege.ca

University Health Network
Toronto Rehab

Cardiovascular Prevention & Rehabilitation Program
347 Rumsey Road, Toronto, ON M4G 1R7

Phone: (416) 597-3422 ext. 5200

Website: www.healthuniversity.ca