

# After a Heart Catheterization and possible Percutaneous Coronary Intervention (PCI)

## Before you go home

If you take blood thinners, ask the heart specialist (cardiologist) or internal medicine specialist (internist) when and how to resume.

**Do not stop** taking these medications without asking your doctor:

- Aspirin
- ticagrelor (Brilinta)
- clopidogrel (Plavix)

## How to care for yourself at home

- Rest for the remainder of today.
- Return to your regular diet. Try not to drink tea or coffee at least for the remainder of today.
- For the next 24 hours, do not drink any alcohol.
- Return to your everyday activities tomorrow.  
**Exceptions to activity:**
  - For the next 2 days, do not lift anything over 10 pounds (5 kilograms).
  - Check with your cardiologist or internist before returning to work. The doctor who did your procedure might also give you this information.
  - The BC Motor Vehicle Act has regulations about driving for heart patients. Ask your cardiologist or internist when you can return to driving.

### Care of your access site

We call the place where the catheter went in the 'access site'.

#### Wrist Access - For the next 8 hours:

- Rest your wrist on your chest in a comfortable position.
- Do not bend your wrist in any direction.

#### Groin access - For the next 12 hours:

- Keep the groin site leg straight as much as possible.
- Climb stairs slowly.
- Try not to bend over.

#### For the next 24 hours:

- Keep the bandage dry.
- Remove the bandage at the end of the 24 hours.

#### For the next 7 days:

- Take only showers - no tub baths.
- Do not go in swimming pools or hot tubs.

You might notice bruising, soreness, and some swelling at your access site. Your skin might turn dark. This is normal. It is from old blood that leaked out during the procedure. It can take several weeks to disappear.

Family practitioner: Refers to family doctor or nurse practitioner

[www.fraserhealth.ca](http://www.fraserhealth.ca)

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your health care provider.

## About your medicines

- For any pain or discomfort at the access site, take plain acetaminophen (Tylenol® or store brand).
- Continue to take your regular medicines unless the doctor has told you to make a change.

## Follow-up

- Arrange to see your family practitioner in one (1) week.
- Arrange to see your heart specialist (cardiologist) or your internal medicine specialist (internist) in 4 to 6 weeks.

## If you have questions

- Call your family practitioner.
- Call HealthLinkBC. **8-1-1**  
(7-1-1 for hearing impaired)

Speak to a registered nurse, pharmacist, or registered dietitian any time.

Also available in 130 languages. For an interpreter, say your language in English. Wait until an interpreter comes on the phone.

- Go online for information.  
HealthLinkBC [www.HealthLinkBC.ca](http://www.HealthLinkBC.ca)  
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada  
[www.heartandstroke.com](http://www.heartandstroke.com)

## What to watch for

### When to call 9-1-1

If you notice bright red bleeding and/or sudden severe pain and swelling at your access site:

- Put firm pressure over the access site.
- Call 9-1-1 right away.
- Hold pressure on the access site or have someone hold it for you until emergency personnel arrive.

If you have any pain like your heart attack or any angina/chest pain:

- Take one spray of nitroglycerin.
- If you still have pain, call 9-1-1.

### When to go to Emergency

Go to the nearest hospital emergency if you notice any of the following in the access site arm or leg:

- gets cold and does not warm up
- becomes very swollen
- feels numb
- hurts quite a lot
- changes colour (skin seen through fingernails turns pale or blue)

### When to call your family practitioner

Arrange to see your family practitioner as soon as possible if you have any of the following:

- a fever over 38.5°C (101.3°F)
- pus coming from the access site
- redness and swelling around the access site
- skin around the access site is warmer than normal to the touch