

Emergency Angiogram at Royal Columbian Hospital Information for Families

Your family member may be having a heart attack. This is a serious condition.

A heart attack happens when the arteries that supply blood to the heart muscle become blocked. The best way to treat a heart attack is to open the blocked artery.

We must begin treatment as soon as possible to limit the damage to the heart muscle.

Why must it be done at Royal Columbian Hospital?

We do these procedures at Royal Columbian Hospital because this where we have the special equipment and staff to do them. The procedure takes place in our Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory.

Once the procedure is complete, the patient usually returns to the hospital where he or she was sent from. However, some patients may need to stay at Royal Columbian Hospital for further treatment.

What is an angiogram?

First, we look for where the blockage is located. This procedure is called an angiogram (sounds like 'ann-gee-oh-gram'). Then, in most cases, we open the blocked artery with a procedure called an angioplasty (sounds like 'ann-gee-oh-plass-tee'). A heart specialist called a cardiologist does these procedures.

To do the angiogram, we insert a small flexible tube into an artery in the groin or wrist. Using an x-ray machine, we thread the tube to the heart's arteries. We inject x-ray dye through the tube to see which arteries are blocked.

Once we locate the block, the next step is to open the blockage. Usually, we do this by inserting a small hollow balloon with a small metal tube called a stent. We open the stent at the site of the blockage. This allows blood to flow to the heart muscle.

Some patients might need to have emergency open heart surgery to treat the blockages.

How long will the angiogram take?

Usually, the angiogram (including the angioplasty) takes about one (1) hour. Sometimes it can take longer.

If you are at Royal Columbian Hospital, you can wait outside the Cardiac Catheterization Laboratory.

If you are at one of our other hospitals, you can wait there for your family member to return or you may want to come to Royal Columbian Hospital to wait.

You will be able to speak to the cardiologist once the procedure is complete.

Family member: We mean anyone who is important to you including a friend.