

Cardiac/Coronary CTA

Why is it done? A computerized tomography (CT) coronary angiogram is an imaging test that looks at the arteries that supply blood to your heart. It may be performed to diagnose the cause of chest pain or other symptoms.

A coronary CT angiogram is different from a standard coronary angiogram. In the traditional procedure (non-CT angiogram), a flexible tube (catheter) is threaded through your groin or arm to your heart or coronary arteries. If you have known coronary artery disease, your doctor might recommend the traditional approach because you can also receive treatment during the procedure.

Please tell the technologist if you have an insulin pump.

How you prepare

- You will need to have someone drive you to and from your test.
- You will be asked not to eat anything for four hours before your test. You can drink water up to one hour prior. Avoid caffeinated drinks 12 hours before your test because they can increase your heart rate, which can make it difficult to get clear pictures of your heart.
- Tell your doctor about the medications that you take. You may be asked to avoid or temporarily stop a medication prior to the test.
- If you have an allergy to contrast dye, your doctor might ask you to take steroid medications 13 hours before the procedure to reduce your risk of a reaction.

Before the procedure

You may receive a medication called a beta blocker to slow your heart rate. Doing so provides clearer images on the CT scan. Let your doctor know if you've had side effects from beta blockers in the past.

You might also be given nitroglycerin to widen (dilate) your coronary arteries. The CT scan may be done using contrast, a dye to help your blood vessels show up

more clearly. If you're allergic to contrast material, you might be given medication to lower your risk of a reaction.

During the procedure

The technician or nurse will insert an IV into your arm. The dye flows through this IV. You'll also have sticky patches called electrodes placed on your chest to record your heart rate.

You'll lie on a long table that slides through a short, tunnel-like machine (CT scanner). If you're uncomfortable in closed spaces, ask your doctor if you need medication to help you relax.

During the scan you need to stay still and hold your breath as directed. Movement can cause blurry images.

A technician operates the CT machine from a room that's separated from your exam room by a glass window. An intercom system allows you and the technician to talk to each other.

Although the actual scanning portion of the test takes as few as five seconds, it may take up to an hour for the whole process to be completed.



What to expect after the test:

After your CT angiogram is completed, plan to rest the rest of the day. Drink plenty of water to help flush the dye from your system. You can return to your normal daily activities the following day.

Results

The images from your CT angiogram should be ready soon after your test. The doctor who asked you to have the CT angiogram should discuss the results of the test with you.

If your test suggests that you have or are at risk of heart disease, you and your doctor can discuss treatment options.