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# Coronary Angioplasty and Stent Insertion: Recovery, Diet, Facts, and Myths

Coronary angioplasty is one of the most common types of surgeries of the heart. It is also known as coronary stenting as it involves the placement of a stent to widen the artery that becomes narrow or hard over a period of time.

Coronary angioplasty is also known as percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty (PTCA) or percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI). During this procedure, a flexible tube called catheter is used to insert a small and hollow metal tube called stent in the blocked or hardened artery.

This article talks about why coronary angioplasty is necessary and when the doctors conduct it. However, the main focus of this article is the recovery after coronary angioplasty and the heart-healthy foods that one should include in their diet afterwards. Lastly, it talks about some of the myths and facts of coronary angioplasty.

## When and Why Is Coronary Angiography Required?

The muscles of the heart must receive a fresh supply of blood constantly to be able to perform optimally. The two large blood vessels called the left and the right coronary artery supply blood to the cardiac muscles. However, over a period of time, these arteries may become narrow or hard due to several reasons.

The narrowing or hardening of the artery prevents and restricts the normal flow of blood to the heart muscles. This can cause the classical symptoms of heart attack called angina. Chest pain and shortness of breath are some of the common symptoms. Angina is a group of symptoms, which appear when the cardiac muscles are deprived of oxygen-rich blood.

Medications are sometimes recommended to treat angina. However, in several cases, doctors recommend coronary angioplasty to the patient to open the artery and restore the normal flow of blood. In other cases, the doctors perform angioplasty as an emergency procedure after a heart attack.



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## Section I: Recovery After Coronary Angioplasty

For patients who undergo planned coronary angioplasty, hospital discharge usually takes place the next day of the procedure. However, patients who undergo angioplasty as an emergency procedure stay in the hospital for a few days for monitoring.

At the time of discharge, the doctors give patients medications and advice pertaining to wound care and hygiene. Additionally, doctors tell about the ways to introduce healthy changes in lifestyle and diet to reduce the risk of fatal cardiac events in the future.

Patients who undergo angioplasty must keep an eye on their wound as the incision site may sometimes develop an infection. The doctors, anyway, prescribe antibiotics for a few days to minimize the chances of infection.

It is normal to feel tenderness in the chest region for a few days after the procedure. It goes away with time. The doctors give patients pain-relieving medications at the time of discharge.

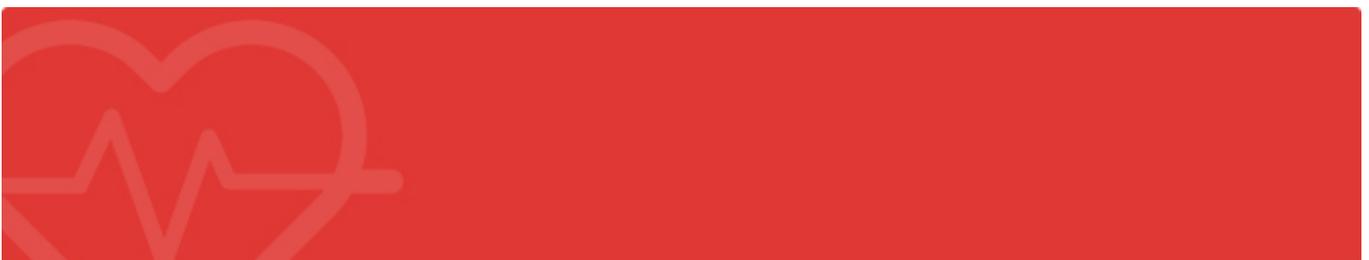
### Guidelines Related to Medications

Patients must follow the instructions of the doctor for speedy and normal recovery after angioplasty. This includes taking all medications on time and taking any unusual symptoms such as redness, fever, or extreme pain seriously.

The doctors recommend many patients to take blood-thinning medications for at least a year after angioplasty. This may include low-dose aspirin, which is usually given in combination with the other drugs. It is important for the patients to take all the medications as stopping them early may increase the risk of heart attack.

The doctors may stop a few medications after some time. However, aspirin is most likely to be continued for the rest of the life.

### Guidelines Related to Lifestyle Changes



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It is important to reduce the chances of heart attack in the future after angioplasty by making healthy lifestyle choices. Some of the lifestyle choices that one can make include the following:

- Try to lose weight if you are overweight
- Incorporate healthy dietary choices into your daily routine
- Stop smoking permanently
- Exercise regularly
- Stay physically active

## Guidelines Related to Work and Driving

People should avoid driving for at least one week after angioplasty. They should seek approval from their doctor before doing so. Usually, it is safe to return to driving if you have passed the exercise test and there is no other underlying condition threatening your health.

Patients who undergo angioplasty as a planned procedure should be able to return to work after a week or two. People who undergo angioplasty after a heart attack may take several weeks to months to return to work.

## Section II: Diet After Coronary Angioplasty



For people, undergoing an angioplasty should act as a wake-up call. They must make efforts to improve their heart health and consuming a heart-healthy diet should be a priority.

It is believed that including heart-healthy foods in the daily diet can lessen the chances of heart attack and other complications after angioplasty by as much as 73 per cent. Additionally, it can help maintain other vital parameters such as blood pressure and cholesterol levels.

People who undergo angioplasty must include the following items in their daily diet:

- Whole grains
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Healthy Fats
- Variety of healthy seeds and nuts
- Variety of beans
- Dark chocolate

On the other hand, such people should avoid consumption of foods and drinks that contain added sugars, processed meats, refined foods and grains, and foods rich in saturated and trans fats.



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### Section III: Myths and Facts Related to Angioplasty

Many people have several apprehensions about angioplasty and what life would be like after the procedure. The following are some of the common myths and facts associated with angioplasty.

**Myth:** For good recovery, complete bed rest is mandatory after discharge from the hospital.

**Fact:** This is not true. In fact, doctors appreciate the patient to return to their normal routine within a week after the planned procedure. Therefore, patients should slowly return to their activities and gradually have the strength to resume regular work. This is, however, not true for people who undergo angioplasty after a heart attack.

**Myth:** Once the symptoms disappear after angioplasty, patients should stop taking medications.

**Fact:** It is non-negotiable for all people to continue to take their medications as given by the doctor. This includes taking anticoagulants. If you stop taking anticoagulants then there is a risk of forming a blood clot that may clog the artery and trigger a heart attack.

**Myth:** Sexual life comes to a halt after angioplasty.

**Fact:** A person who has had angioplasty can have a normal sex life like any other individual. People with planned angioplasty can return to normal sex life within a few days. However, those who've had angioplasty after a heart attack may have to wait for a few weeks.

**Myth:** Angioplasty patients must avoid exercising.

**Fact:** Exercise is an important part of cardiac rehabilitation after angioplasty. Doctors create a holistic and structured exercise plan for all patients who've had angioplasty. Therefore, they must exercise as advised by the doctor for a speedy recovery.

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Myth: Smoking has no impact on recovery and future outcomes after angioplasty.

Fact: Smoking has a tremendous impact on heart health. If you start smoking after angioplasty, then there are huge chances that the blockage in the artery may occur again.

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