

Right Heart Catheter: Patient Information Brochure

WHAT IS A RIGHT HEART CATHETERISATION?

This is a procedure where a catheter is passed into the veins in your neck or groin to measure the pressure in the heart and lungs.

WHAT SHOULD I DO TO PREPARE?

No fasting is required and you should take your medications as normal unless instructed otherwise by your doctor.

Arrive at the Heart Lung Clinic 30 minutes before your appointment time. The Heart Lung Clinic is located on level 4 Xavier Building in the Public Hospital.

Staff here will arrange for you to see a clinic nurse before you have your catheter.

If you have been referred from another hospital or GP you should bring a referral letter covering your medical history.

If possible, come with a family member or friend who can accompany you home.
Wear loose comfortable clothing and shoes.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF I TAKE WARFARIN?

If you take warfarin you will need to discuss with your doctor what dose to take.

Bring a recent INR level with you when you come to your appointment (no older than 3 days).

The nurse may repeat the INR again before the procedure depending on the level.

If the level is higher than 3 your procedure may be postponed.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING THE PROCEDURE?

When you reach the procedure room the doctor will talk to you about the procedure, explain the risks and ask you to sign a consent form.

You will be asked to remove clothing from above the waist and put on a hospital gown.

You will need to lie flat throughout the procedure. Let the nurse know if you have back or breathing problems that may make this difficult for you.

The procedure is done under local anaesthetic and you should not experience much discomfort apart from the initial injection.

If you do experience discomfort or are worried about anything you should let the nurse and doctor know so that they can help alleviate the problem.



Local Anaesthetic is injected under the skin near the neck vein using a fine needle, a plastic catheter is then passed into the vein to the heart and pressure readings are taken from the heart chambers and lungs.

If the pressure is high the doctor may decide to give a short acting drug to try and lower the pressure temporarily.

The procedure normally takes between 20 minutes and an hour.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE PROCEDURE?

When the catheter is removed, the doctor will apply pressure to the small puncture site at your neck to prevent bleeding.

You will then be asked to apply light pressure to the puncture site for a further 10 minutes.

When finished you will return to the Heart Lung Clinic where you will be seen by either a doctor or nurse before you go home.

Avoid heavy lifting for 24 hours.

Activities like coughing; sneezing, laughing or bending over can cause the puncture site to bleed a little, so you should support the puncture site if needed.

If you experience swelling, increased pain or bleeding in your neck after you leave, you should apply pressure and seek assistance from your local doctor or emergency department.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THIS PROCEDURE?

There are risks associated with this procedure: these are listed below for your information.

The doctor will go through the risks with you again before you sign the consent and provide more information if required.

COMMON (less than 1/20 chance)

- Minor bleeding and bruising at the puncture site
- Abnormal heart beat lasting several seconds that settles by itself.
- Difficulty passing the catheter into the neck vein.
- Flushed hot feeling that settles quickly.
- Back pain related to lying flat.

RARE (less than 1/500 chance)

- Local anaesthetic around your voice box may cause temporary loss of voice - this wears off quickly.
- Abnormal Heart Rhythm that continues for a longer time and may need to be corrected.
- Punctured artery in the neck that may cause bruising or bleeding and require repair.
- Allergic reaction
- Air entering the vein and lodging in the lung.
- Collapsed lung



EXTREMELY RARE (less than 1/1000 chance)

- Life threatening damage to the lung blood vessels.
- Stroke.
- Infection.
- Death

NOTES AND QUESTIONS TO ASK

MY DOCTOR:

**With any concerns or questions you can contact the Heart and Lung Clinic
St. Vincent's Public hospital (02) 8382 3150.**

References:

1. Hoepfer MM, Lee SH, et al. Complications of right heart catheterization procedures in patients with pulmonary hypertension in experienced centers. *J Am Coll Cardiol.* 2006 Dec 19;48(12):2546-52. Epub 2006 Nov 28.
2. Ranu H, Smith K, et al. A retrospective review to evaluate the safety of right heart catheterization via the internal jugular vein in the assessment of pulmonary hypertension. *Clin Cardiol.* 2010 May;33(5):303-6.

Related Policies/Procedures

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