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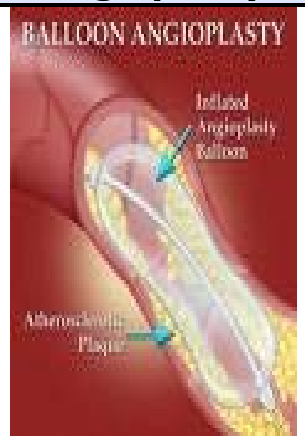
Angioplasty



LET'S HELP ERADICATE IGNORANCE

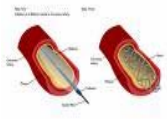
Understanding Angioplasty

Coronary angioplasty (AN-jee-oh-plas-tee) is a procedure used to open blocked or narrowed coronary (heart) arteries. The procedure improves blood flow to the heart muscle.

Over time, a fatty substance called plaque (plak) can build up in your arteries, causing them to harden and narrow. This condition is called atherosclerosis (ath-er-o-skler-O-sis).

Atherosclerosis can affect any artery in the body. When atherosclerosis affects the coronary arteries, the condition is called coronary heart disease (CHD) or coronary artery disease.

Angioplasty can restore blood flow to the heart if the coronary arteries have become narrowed or blocked because of CHD.



Angioplasty is a common medical procedure. It may be used to: Improve symptoms of CHD, such as angina (an-JI-nuh or AN-juh-nuh) and shortness of breath,Reduce damage to the heart muscle caused by a heart attack, Reduce the risk of death in some patients.

Who Needs Coronary Angioplasty?

Coronary angioplasty is used to restore blood flow to the heart when the coronary (heart) arteries have become narrowed or blocked because of coronary heart disease (CHD).

Angioplasty is one of a number of treatments for CHD. Other treatments include medicines and coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG). Your doctor will consider many factors when deciding what treatment or combination of treatments to recommend.

Compared with CABG, some advantages of angioplasty are that it:

- Doesn't require an incision (cut)

- Doesn't require general anesthesia
- Has a shorter recovery time

Angioplasty also is used as an emergency procedure during a heart attack. As plaque builds up in the coronary arteries, it can rupture. This can cause a blood clot to form on the plaque's surface and block blood flow. The lack of oxygen-rich blood to the heart can damage the heart muscle.

Quickly opening a blockage lessens the damage during a heart attack by restoring blood flow to the heart muscle. Angioplasty usually is the fastest way to open a blocked artery and is the best approach during a heart attack.

A disadvantage of angioplasty, when compared with CABG, is that the artery more frequently renarrows over time. However, the risk of this happening is lower when stents are used, especially stents coated with medicines (drug-eluting stents).

Stents are small mesh tubes that support the inner artery wall. They reduce the chance of the artery becoming narrowed or blocked again. Some stents are coated with medicines that are slowly and continuously released into the artery. The medicines help prevent the artery from becoming blocked again.

However, stents aren't without risks. In some cases, blood clots can form in stents and cause a heart attack. (For more information, go to "What Are the Risks of Coronary Angioplasty?")

What Are the Risks of Coronary Angioplasty?

Coronary angioplasty is a common medical procedure. Serious complications don't occur often. However, they can happen no matter how careful your doctor is or how well he or she does the procedure. Serious complications include:Bleeding from the blood vessel where the catheters were inserted, Blood vessel damage from the catheters, An allergic reaction to the dye given during the angioplasty, An arrhythmia (irregular heartbeat), The need for emergency coronary artery bypass grafting during the procedure (2–4 percent of people). This may occur if an artery closes down instead of opening up, Damage to the kidneys caused by the dye used, Heart attack (3–5 percent of people), Stroke (less than 1 percent of people).

Sometimes chest pain can occur during angioplasty because the balloon briefly blocks blood supply to the heart. As with any procedure involving the heart, complications can sometimes, though rarely, cause death.

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