Balloon Angioplasty and Stenting Procedures

DEFINITION
Angioplasty is a procedure to open narrowed or blocked blood vessels that supply blood to the heart. These blood vessels are called the coronary arteries. A coronary artery stent is a small, metal mesh tube that expands inside a coronary artery. A stent is often placed after angioplasty. It helps prevent the artery from closing up again. A drug eluting stent has medicine in it that helps prevent scar tissue from re-narrowing the artery.

DESCRIPTION
Before the angioplasty procedure begins, you will be given some mild sedation. You may also be given blood thinning medicines to keep a blood clot from forming.

Your physician will insert a catheter (flexible tube) through the incision into an artery. Sometimes the catheter will be placed in your arm or wrist. You will be awake during the procedure.

The physician uses live x-ray pictures to carefully guide the catheter up into your heart and arteries. Dye will be injected into your body to highlight blood flow through the arteries. This helps the physicians see any blockages in the blood vessels that lead to your heart.

A guide wire is moved into and across the blockage. A balloon catheter is advanced over the guide wire and into the blockage. The balloon on the end is inflated. This opens the blocked vessel and restores proper blood flow to the heart.

A stent (wire mesh tube) may then be placed in this blocked area. The stent is inserted along with the balloon catheter. It expands when the balloon is inflated. The stent is then left there to help keep the artery open.

WHY THE PROCEDURE IS PERFORMED
Arteries can become narrowed or blocked by deposits called plaque. Plaque is made up of fat and cholesterol that builds up on the inside of the artery walls. This condition is called atherosclerosis. Not every blockage can be treated with angioplasty. Some need coronary bypass (heart surgery).

ANGIOPLASTY MAY BE USED TO TREAT:
• Persistent chest pain (angina) that medicines do not control
• Blockage of one or more coronary arteries that puts you at risk for a heart attack
• Blockage in a coronary artery during or after a heart attack

RISKS
Your physician will explain the possible complications to you before the procedure.
Balloon Angioplasty and Stenting Procedures (continued)

How will the procedure make me feel?
You will be awake and able to follow instructions during the procedure. You may experience some chest discomfort during the balloon inflation that is normal. Please communicate any discomfort to the staff.

AFTER THE PROCEDURE
Usually, the average hospital stay is two days or less. In general, people who have angioplasty are able to walk around within six hours after the procedure. Complete recovery takes a week or less. Keep the area where the catheter was inserted dry for 24 to 48 hours. Most people take aspirin and another medicine called clopidogrel (Plavix) after this procedure. These medicines are blood thinners, and they keep your blood from forming clots in your arteries and stent. A blood clot can lead to a heart attack. Take the medicines exactly as your physician tells you. Do not stop taking them before talking with your physician first.

OUTLOOK (PROGNOSIS)
For most people, angioplasty greatly improves blood flow through the coronary arteries and the heart. It may eliminate the need for coronary artery bypass surgery (CABG). Angioplasty does not cure the cause of the blockage in your arteries. Your arteries may become narrow again. Follow your heart-healthy diet, exercise, stop smoking and reduce stress to help lower your chances of having a blocked artery again. Your health care provider may prescribe medicine to help lower your cholesterol.