

Achieve

A Newsletter for AvMed Members

▶ YOUR HEALTHIEST LIFE WITH CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE

Myths & Facts About Angioplasty



Lifestyle changes and medication are often the first steps to treating coronary artery disease. But if symptoms like chest pain or shortness of breath continue, your next step may be angioplasty with a stent (aka percutaneous coronary intervention, or PCI).

Here's how it works: Doctors use a tiny balloon to open clogged arteries, and then they insert a wire-mesh tube, or stent, to keep blood flowing easily. They access the arteries by threading a

thin tube called a catheter through a large vessel in your groin or arm.

PCI has been around for decades, but misperceptions linger. Let's separate fact from fiction.

MYTH
PCI is a cure for heart disease

FACT PCI may be used to treat your chest pain, but it doesn't fix what's causing your arteries to get

blocked in the first place. The good news: Many people who undergo PCI won't need a new procedure for the same blockage.

"The vast majority of stents stay open forever," says James Smith, M.D., interventional cardiologist at AdventHealth in Tampa. He points out, however, that new blockages can form elsewhere.

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MYTH

I'll face a long, tough recovery

FACT Chances are, you'll be back on your feet quickly. Elective PCIs are usually outpatient procedures. "Most patients go home the same day," says Hiram Bezerra, M.D., medical director of the Interventional Cardiology Center at Tampa General Hospital.

Afterward, expect to spend three to six hours in recovery, he explains. Because you'll receive anesthesia, you'll need a friend to drive you home. Then you'll slow down for five days, avoiding strenuous activity and not using the arm or leg where the catheter was inserted. If your groin artery was used, no stairs or driving either.

Your doctor will give you guidance on how quickly you can resume normal activities, but plan on several days of downtime.

Taking it easy is important, Dr. Bezerra says, because it helps prevent bleeding and gives the procedure site time to heal.



MYTH

The contrast dye can harm my kidneys

FACT That's rare, affecting only 2% of patients, says the National Kidney Foundation. The contrast dyes doctors use help them see your blood flowing on live x-rays.

Your doctor will evaluate your kidney function before your PCI. "Kidney damage depends on how much dye is used. It's

something we're cautious with," says Dr. Smith. For most people, he says, the benefits of PCI outweigh the risks of dyes.

MYTH

I won't need medication anymore

FACT Your meds — and a healthy lifestyle — are still crucial to controlling cholesterol and blood pressure, says Dr. Bezerra. "This will prevent the disease from progressing."

We're Here for You

Your Case Manager can connect you to the resources you need. Just call **1-833-609-0735**.



Healthy Eating Made Simple

Elizabeth Ferrer, R.D., AvMed's registered dietitian, shares her favorite tips for happier, healthier meals — without feeling deprived.

7 Ways to Break a Salt Habit

Healthy eating is all about balance, especially when it comes to sodium (aka salt). It keeps your fluid levels just right and helps transmit electrical signals throughout your nervous system. But too much can make you retain water, raise blood pressure, contribute to heart disease and stroke, and damage your kidneys or liver.

Here are my seven favorite strategies for eating less salt. Try a couple of them each week. Done consistently, they can have a big impact. After a few weeks, you won't miss the shaker!

1 Eat more fresh fruits and veggies. They're naturally low in sodium

and loaded with nutrients. Choose frozen veggies with no added sauce.

2 Say no to processed foods like ramen noodles, macaroni-and-cheese kits, and packaged frozen dinners.

3 Buy fresh meats and avoid processed ones like bacon, lunch meats, and hot dogs — they're super high in sodium.

4 Cook creatively. Instead of using salt, try a squeeze of lemon or lime juice or a splash of vinegar. Experiment with new spices and herbs.

5 Choose lower-sodium condiments. They may have up to 96% less sodium than regular varieties. Read food labels to find low-sodium options.

6 Be smart when you eat out. Restaurant portions can be huge — and high in sodium. So cut your salt and calories in half by sharing a plate with a friend or taking half your dinner home. Ask your server how dishes have been prepared and see if the chef can cook your meal with less salt. If your entrée comes with sauce, request it on the side, then use it sparingly.

7 Snack wisely. Try to just say no to chips and pretzels. Instead, reach



for dried fruit or lower-sodium cheeses. Longing for something crunchy? Try fresh fruit or veggies, like a carrot or an apple. You'll be glad you did.

When Times Are Tough, We're Here to Help

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AvMed is committed to helping all Members feel their best physically — and emotionally.

Through our partnership with Optum Behavioral Health, we can lead Members to the right resources for mental

health support as well as substance use concerns. Members can choose from more than 8,600 Florida-based psychiatrists, psychologists, and other mental health counselors.

Members can even download **Sanvello**, an

app that can share strategies for dialing down symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression — anytime. These powerful tools are there for Members whenever symptoms come up.

More information is available at **AvMed.org**.

Health and wellness or prevention information.