Angiogram

What is an angiogram?

An angiogram is an X-ray test to detect any enlargement, narrowing or blockages in the blood vessels. The lungs, heart, brain, neck, legs and arms are common areas of concentration during an angiogram.

Who can benefit from having an angiogram?

An angiogram can be used to detect and diagnose certain medical conditions including coronary heart disease, angina, myocardial infarction and portal hypertension - among others. If your doctor or physician suspects any of these, they may request that you have an angiogram.

Procedure

You will be asked to lie on a table and a radiologist will administer a local anesthetic - usually into the groin (but sometimes through the arm). A catheter (small tube) is then pushed into a blood vessel in the groin, and passed through your body up to the suspected blood vessel(s); you will not be able to feel this. A special dye is then injected into the catheter so that specific blood vessels can be easily seen on the X-ray pictures, which are taken following the injection. The catheter is then removed and the wound bandaged. During the angiogram you will be continually observed on a heart monitor.

Recovery

You will need to rest in hospital for a few hours following the procedure, after which your doctor will discuss the angiogram results with you. You will probably be able to go home on the same day. There may be some bruising in the area where the catheter was inserted.

Risks

Complications surrounding an angiogram include a haematoma (blood collecting under the skin), allergic reaction to the dye, damage to the blood vessels, blood clotting, infection and kidney damage from the dye. Very rarely an angiogram may cause a stroke or heart attack; however your heart rate is constantly monitored throughout the procedure. Any complications are usually incurred very soon following the angiogram, which is why you are asked to stay in hospital and kept under observation for a few hours.