

Questions to Ask Your Cardiac Care Team

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Heart conditions often are serious and require prompt diagnosis and treatment. Cardiac procedures (e.g., cardiac catheterization, coronary angioplasty, echocardiogram) can be frightening for heart patients and for their families. Good communication—between the patient (or the patient's family or caregivers) and his or her medical team—often plays an important role in cardiac care.

In many cases, the more knowledge a patient has about his or her heart condition, the easier it is to make decisions about treatment. If the patient's condition is not a life-threatening emergency, members of the cardiac care team (e.g., cardiologist, physician assistant [PA], cardiac nurse) usually explain diagnosis and treatment options carefully to the patient and family and answer any questions they have.

Here are some questions to ask your cardiologist or other member of your cardiac care team about your heart condition. **Print this page** and check off the questions you would like answered. Then, take it with you to your appointment and give it to a member of your cardiac care team.

Questions to Ask about Your Heart Condition

- How severe is my heart condition? Is there a cure?
- Is my heart condition congenital or related to my environment or lifestyle?
- What complications may develop as a result of my heart condition?
- Do you recommend any lifestyle or dietary changes to help manage my heart condition?
- Can my heart condition be controlled with medication? What are the common side effects of these medications?
- What should I do if I experience **severe side effects? Telephone # to call:**
- Should I avoid any over-the-counter drugs (e.g., aspirin) during treatment?
- If medication is ineffective, what other treatment options are available?
- May my heart condition require surgery? If so, what type of cardiac procedure or heart surgery may be performed?
- Where can I find more information about my heart condition?

Questions to Ask about Cardiac Procedures

- Will a board-certified cardiologist (specialist in the cardiovascular system) or cardiac surgeon be performing my cardiac procedure or surgery?

- About how many of these cardiac procedures has my doctor performed? About how many does he or she perform each month?

- How should I prepare for this cardiac procedure? For example, should I discontinue taking certain medications (e.g., warfarin [Coumadin[®]], aspirin, Viagra[®], Levitra[®], Cialis[®], insulin) or refrain from eating or drinking for a period of time prior to undergoing the procedure?

- How long will this cardiac procedure take?

- Will I be able to drive myself or go home immediately following the procedure, or will I be hospitalized?

- What side effects or complications are associated with this cardiac procedure?

- If an abnormality is detected during this procedure, what will be the course of action? May an additional cardiac procedure or surgery be required?

- Will the results of the cardiac procedure be available immediately? If not, how long will it take to get the results? Should I call, or will someone contact me?

Telephone # to call:

When to call: Date:

Time:

- What are the restrictions following this cardiac procedure? How soon after the procedure can I drive, exercise, resume sexual relations, and return to work?

- How often should I be seen for follow-up appointments?

Next appointment: Date:

Time:

- Can you recommend a local or online support group for patients with my heart condition?