Carotid Artery Disease Treatment

When fats or plaque stick to the lining of the carotid arteries, treatment is important to prevent a stroke. The most common treatments are:

- Carotid Endarterectomy (ka-ROT-id en-DAR-ter-EK-toe-me)
- Carotid Artery Stent Placement

To Prepare for Treatment

- You will need to stay in the hospital overnight for either treatment.
- **If you have the endarterectomy**, you must have an adult drive you home and stay with you for the first 24 hours. You may not go home alone.
- **If you take antiplatelet medicines**, such as Plavix or aspirin, check with the doctor who prescribed these medicines to see if and when you need to stop these medicines before surgery.
- **If you have diabetes**, talk with your doctor about taking insulin or managing your condition before surgery.
- You will not be able to eat or drink anything after midnight before the treatment. Take medicines the morning of treatment with small sips of water.

Tell your doctor or nurse if you have an allergy to contrast medicines.

The Day of Treatment

- Check in at the Ross Heart Hospital Registration (1st floor). You will be taken upstairs for surgery. A waiting room for family and friends is outside the unit.
An intravenous (IV) line will be placed in your arm to give you fluids and medicines during the surgery and to help you recover afterwards.

**About Carotid Endarterectomy Treatment**

- Your neck is cleaned before the procedure to prevent infection. The surgeon will make an incision from about the base of your ear to just above your collar bone.
- The carotid artery is opened and a temporary shunt (small tube) is placed above and below the opening in the artery to maintain blood flow to your brain.
- To remove plaque from the blocked artery, a special knife is used to scrape the artery wall clean.
- The carotid artery is closed with a small patch. The skin incision is closed and stitches are placed under the skin. The skin edges are closed with small adhesive strips called steri strips.

**During Your Hospital Stay**

- After surgery, your will be on a heart monitor and have your vital signs, such as blood pressure and temperature checked often.
- To check your alertness, you will be asked your name or the day of the week.
- To check your muscle strength, you will be asked to move your arms and legs, and squeeze the nurse’s hands.
- You will not eat the evening of surgery. You may eat the next morning after the surgeon checks your ability to swallow.
- Your may have discomfort in your neck after surgery. You may feel discomfort when speaking or swallowing as you recover. Tell your doctor and nurse how you feel. Pain medicine is given for your comfort.
- If you feel okay and are able to eat without a problem, you will be allowed to leave the hospital. **For your safety, you will need someone to drive you home. The medicines used for surgery can affect your judgment and reflexes.**
About Carotid Artery Stent Placement Treatment

Another treatment option is the carotid stent. A carotid stent is a small narrow tube that is used to hold the artery open. It may be done at the same time as an angiogram test or at a separate time.

- Stenting is done under a local anesthesia and with a small amount of sedation. These medicines keep you pain free and relaxed during the surgery.
- You may be asked to talk or squeeze a squeak toy during surgery.
- A small area of your groin, called the access site, will be cleaned and shaved to prepare for the catheter. You may feel pressure when the catheter enters the artery. An injection of contrast helps the doctor to see where there is blockage or narrowing in the artery. **Tell the doctor if you have an allergy to contrast medicines.**
- A catheter is slowly moved up the artery to the neck. X-rays guide the catheter. To protect the blood flow to your brain and prevent a stroke during stent placement, a small net or protection device is used in the artery.
  - With the net in place, another catheter with a balloon on the end is placed through the carotid artery where the vessel is narrow. The balloon is inflated to flatten the plaque on the artery walls.
  - The stent is placed to keep the blood vessel open. A second ballooning may be done to make sure the stent is firmly against the blood vessel wall. The protection device is then removed.

During Your Hospital Stay

- You will remain in the hospital overnight. You will be on a heart monitor and will have your blood pressure checked.
- To check your alertness afterward, you will be asked your name or day of the week.
- To check you muscle strength, you will also be asked to move your arms and legs and to squeeze your nurse’s hands.
- **For your safety, you will need someone to drive you home. The medicines used for surgery can affect your judgment and reflexes.**

Talk with your doctor or nurse about any questions you have about treatment.