Swan Ganz Catheter

A Swan Ganz Catheter is a long plastic IV tube (catheter) which has several smaller openings (ports). It is sometimes called a pulmonary artery catheter. The purpose of the Swan Ganz Catheter is to measure the pressures in the heart and the vessels going to the lungs and to determine how much medicine or IV fluid to give you.

A doctor will put the catheter into a large vein in the neck or under the collarbone. Medicine is given to numb the area before the catheter is put in. The doctor guides the catheter as it floats through the right side of the heart into a large artery called the pulmonary artery that leads to the lungs.

When the catheter is in place, it is attached to a monitor. The monitor displays a wave form and numbers. Measurements are read from the monitor. These measurements help doctors and nurses decide how well the heart and lungs are working. The measurements help doctors decide how to treat heart and lung problems. In addition to monitoring, the catheter is used to give IV fluids, medicine, and to take blood samples.