

Peripheral Arterial Thrombolysis

If a blood clot forms in an artery in the leg or arm, blood flow to the limb can be blocked, resulting in severe pain and death of tissue in the limb. **Peripheral arterial thrombolysis** is a procedure to dissolve a blood clot in a leg or arm artery and to restore blood flow. The procedure is often done by a specially trained doctor called an **interventional radiologist**.



Thrombolysis can dissolve a clot that is blocking blood flow.

Before the Procedure

Follow any instructions you are given on how to prepare, including:

- Do not eat or drink anything for 6 hours before the procedure.
- Tell the technologist what medications, herbs, or supplements you take; if you are, or may be, pregnant; or if you are allergic to **contrast medium** (x-ray dye) or other medications.

During the Procedure

- An **IV** (intravenous) line is put into a vein to give you fluid and medications. You may be given medication through the IV to help you relax. A local anesthetic is given to keep you from feeling pain where the **catheter** (thin, flexible tube) will be inserted.
- A very small incision is made over the insertion site. The catheter is inserted through the incision into the artery. The movement of the catheter is watched on a video monitor.
- Contrast medium is injected through the catheter into the artery. This helps the artery show clearly on x-ray images. Using these images as a guide, the radiologist moves the catheter to the clot.
- When the catheter reaches the clot, medication to dissolve the clot is injected through the catheter. This is done slowly, over a period of a few hours. The catheter is left in place until the clot has dissolved. This can take up to 72 hours.
- Once the clot has dissolved, any narrowing of the artery may be treated using peripheral angioplasty or a stent. Your doctor can tell you more about these treatments.
- When the procedure is finished, the catheter is removed. Pressure is put on the insertion site for 15 minutes to stop bleeding.

Potential Risks and Complications

- Bleeding at the insertion site or internally
- Bruising at the insertion site
- Damage to the artery
- Problems due to contrast medium, including allergic reaction or kidney damage

After the Procedure

- You will be told to lie flat and keep the insertion site still for 6 hours to prevent bleeding.
- You may stay in the hospital overnight.
- Drink plenty of fluids to help flush the contrast medium from your system.
- After you go home, care for the insertion site as directed.