
Radial Artery Catheterisation: Safer for Women



Threading a catheter to the heart, in order to clear a blockage or place a stent, is usually performed via the femoral artery in a patients' groin. In an innovative, less traumatic and much safer alternative, especially for women, the catheter can now be inserted through the wrist in a technique called radial artery catheterisation.

Colin Barker MD, cardiologist at the Houston Methodist DeBakey Heart & Vascular Center, explained that, according to a recent study of more than 1,700 catheterisations in women, the radial artery approach showed a 59 percent improvement on rates of bleeding or vascular complications.

Tube Placement via X-ray

By inserting a small tube into the radial artery situated on thumb side of the wrist, the physician uses X-ray to guide the catheter up towards the shoulder and back down to the heart.

What makes this procedure safer is the fact that bleeding complications are visible sooner due to the radial artery being located closer to the skin's surface. Additionally, this approach offers increased patient comfort, allowing them to sit up and get out of bed within minutes. In comparison, the traditional catheterisation requires patients to lay flat for up to six hours following the procedure.

Barker is one of the few Houston doctors who regularly perform radial artery catheterisation, described as a difficult technique that is tedious to learn. He noted that roughly 5 percent of local cases and less than 20 percent of US cases use this alternative. It is chosen in 60 to 80 percent of cases outside the US and Dr. Barker confirmed it had become standard medical practice in Europe.

Based on survey results showing more than 80 percent of patients preferring the radial artery approach, Barker believes patient preference will help increase the implementation of this alternative catheterisation method in the US.

[Source: Houston Methodist](#)

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