

PRINTABLE FLOW TOOL

Flow Tool 9: Questions Before a Planned Test or Procedure

PRINTABLE
VERSION

These questions clarify what decision the test or procedure could change, its likely benefits and risks, and the alternatives.

Most cardiac tests and elective procedures are planned decisions. The right choice depends on what the test or procedure is expected to change. In a true emergency, follow emergency instructions first. For a nonemergency decision, bring these questions to the conversation before you agree to a planned test, stent, or procedure.

- What decision will this test or procedure help us make?
- Which question matters most here: what the heart or arteries look like, whether blood flow is limited, or what my overall risk is?
- What benefit should I realistically expect: relief of symptoms, prevention of an event, longer life, or better information?
- What risks matter most for me, given my kidney function, bleeding risk, allergies, frailty, medicines, and other conditions?
- What are the reasonable alternatives, including medical treatment, a different test, watchful waiting, or no immediate procedure?

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- What is likely to happen if I wait or decide not to proceed?
- Is this urgent, or is there time to discuss it further or obtain a second opinion?

For a visible narrowing, ask whether it explains symptoms or limits blood flow, and which outcome the proposed treatment is expected to improve.