

Radial Artery Catheterization

Any catheter placement into a blood vessel is associated with a risk of bleeding. After removal of the catheter from the femoral artery, the patient will need to lie flat without bending the leg for 2 to 6 hours to allow the artery to heal. In some cases, even with prolonged immobility, internal bleeding can occur and can be severe enough to require blood transfusions or surgery to repair the femoral artery. These complications are rare, but they may be less common if the catheter is inserted in the wrist. Because the radial artery is much smaller and located closer to the skin surface, internal bleeding is eliminated and any external bleeding can be easily compressed. After the catheter is removed from the radial artery, a compression device is placed around the wrist to apply pressure on the artery, and there is no requirement for the patient to remain immobile. In general, patients find radial catheterization more comfortable than femoral catheterization because they are able to sit up, walk, and eat immediately. This is a particular advantage for patients with back problems because there is no need for heavy pressure on the leg and prolonged immobility.

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