



# HEART AND VASCULAR CENTER OF LAKE COUNTY

3915 W. Oglesby Avenue | Gurnee, Illinois 60031 | P: 847.336.1600

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## **What is a Cardiologist?**

A cardiologist is a doctor with special training and skill in finding, treating and preventing diseases of the heart and blood vessels.

## **What is an F.A.C.C.?**

An F.A.C.C. is a Fellow of the American College of Cardiology. Based on their outstanding credentials, achievements, and community contribution to cardiovascular medicine, physicians who are elected to fellowship can use F.A.C.C., Fellow of the American College of Cardiology, as a professional designation.

The strongest evidence of achievement for those who earn the F.A.C.C insignia comes from their peers. Letters of sponsorship from other F.A.C.C.s and medical school faculty attest to professional competence and commitment to excellence, and are necessary for election to Fellowship in the College.

When accepting election to Fellowship in ACC, each physician pledges, "cooperation and loyalty to the attainment of the ideals" of the College, the most important of which is to promote excellence in cardiovascular care.

Each year at ACC's Annual Scientific Session, newly appointed Fellows take part in the convocation ceremony honoring their new rank as F.A.C.C. and reaffirming the commitment to furthering optimal cardiovascular care. New Fellows receive their certificate of Fellowship and are officially recognized as Fellows of the College at the convocation ceremony.

## **How are Cardiologists Trained?**

Cardiologists receive extensive education, including four years of medical school and three years of training in general internal medicine. After this, a cardiologist spends three or more years in specialized training. That's ten or more years of training!

## **How Does a Cardiologist Become Certified?**

In order to become certified, doctors who have completed a minimum of ten years of clinical and educational preparation must pass a rigorous two-day exam given by the American Board of Internal Medicine. This exam tests not only their knowledge and judgment, but also their ability to provide superior care.

## **When Would I See a Cardiologist?**

If your general medical doctor feels that you might have a significant heart or related condition, he or she will often call on a cardiologist for help. Symptoms like shortness of breath, chest pains, or dizzy spells often require special testing. Sometimes heart murmurs or ECG changes need the evaluation of a cardiologist. Cardiologists help victims of heart disease return to a full and useful life and also counsel patients about the risks and prevention of heart disease. Most importantly, cardiologists are involved in the treatment of heart attacks, heart failure, and serious heart rhythm disturbances. Their skills and training are required whenever decisions are made about procedures such as cardiac catheterization, balloon angioplasty, or heart surgery.

## **What Does a Cardiologist Do?**

Whether the cardiologist sees you in the office or in the hospital, he or she will review your medical history and perform a physical examination which may include checking your blood pressure, weight, heart, lungs, and blood vessels. Some problems may be diagnosed by your symptoms and the doctor's findings when you are examined. You may need



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additional tests such as an ECG, x-ray, or blood test. Other problems will require more specialized testing. Your cardiologist may recommend lifestyle changes or medicine. Each patient's case is unique.

## **What Kinds of Tests May the Cardiologist Recommend or Perform?**

Examples include:

- Echocardiogram – a soundwave picture to look at the structure and function of the heart.
- Ambulatory ECG – a recording during activity to look for abnormal heart rhythms.
- Exercise test – a study to measure your heart's performance and limitations.
- Cardiac Catheterization – a test in which a small tube is placed in or near the heart to take pictures, look at how the heart is working, check the electrical system, or help relieve blockage.

## **Is My Cardiologist a Surgeon?**

No, however, many cardiologists do tests such as cardiac catheterizations that require small skin punctures or incisions, and some put in pacemakers.

## **Do All Cardiologists Perform Cardiac Catheterizations?**

No. Many cardiologists are specially trained in this technique, but others specialize in office diagnosis, the performance and interpretation of echocardiograms, ECGs, and exercise tests. Still others have special skill in cholesterol management or cardiac rehabilitation and fitness. All cardiologists know how and when these tests are needed and how to manage cardiac emergencies.

## **How Does the Cardiologist Work with Other Doctors in My Care?**

A cardiologist usually serves as a consultant to other doctors. Your physician may recommend a cardiologist or you may choose one yourself. As your cardiac care proceeds, your cardiologist will guide your care and plan tests and treatment with the doctors and nurses who are looking after you.

## **Where Do Cardiologists Work?**

They may work in single or group private practices. Many cardiologists with special teaching interests work in universities where their duties also include research and patient care. There are cardiologists on staff in the Veterans Administration hospitals and in the Armed Forces.

## **Will My Insurance Cover the Services of a Cardiologist?**

Yes, in most cases. However, insurance plans vary and each case is handled individually. Your doctor and office staff will be glad to discuss your insurance plan and billing with you.

## **What Questions Should I Ask My Cardiologist?**

Ask whatever questions are on your mind. For instance, if you have had a coronary angiogram, you may ask to see the pictures of your heart and have your cardiologist explain what they mean. Your heart and health are, of course, vitally important to you. Remember, your cardiologist wants you to understand your illness and be an active participant in your own care.