



healthmap[™]

What is

**CORONARY ARTERY
DISEASE?**

What is **CORONARY ARTERY DISEASE**?

Coronary artery disease (CAD) is a type of heart disease. CAD occurs when the blood vessels that supply blood to the heart become blocked. These blood vessels are called coronary arteries. They can become narrow if fat and cholesterol create a buildup of plaque, known as atherosclerosis. A blood clot can also form on a plaque, which can clog an artery quickly. When oxygen-rich blood cannot reach the heart muscle, it starts to die. This is called a heart attack.

What are the **SYMPTOMS** of CAD?

Plaque can build up for many years, slowly causing the arteries to narrow, before causing problems. However, a lack or decrease of blood flow to the heart from narrowing of the arteries can cause symptoms, known as angina. These problems often get worse with activity and better with rest. Symptoms include:



Chest pain (most common)

- A fist-sized area of pressure or squeezing in the middle or left side of the chest
- Pain may spread to the arm, neck, or jaw



Shortness of breath



Feeling very tired and unable to do normal activities

Other symptoms: Some people, especially older adults, women, or those with diabetes, may have less obvious symptoms, such as:



Nausea



Pain in the left arm or shoulder



Getting lightheaded with activity



During a heart attack, these symptoms happen suddenly. They are often more severe and do not get better with rest.

What **TESTS** are used to diagnose CAD?

- **ECG (electrocardiogram):** Stickers are placed on the chest to check the heart's electrical activity. This can show signs of CAD.
- **Echocardiogram:** Sound waves create pictures of the heart to show how well it is pumping.
- **Stress test:** The heart is tested while the patient walks on a treadmill or takes medication that puts the heart under stress. This test can help determine if blood flow to the heart is being limited.
- **CT scan:** An imaging test checks the heart and coronary vessels for plaque.
- **Cardiac catheterization:** A doctor injects dye into a thin tube inserted through the wrist or groin to see if there are blockages in the heart vessels.

How is CAD **TREATED?**

The treatment of CAD focuses on lowering the risk of heart attack and keeping the heart healthy.

Diet and Lifestyle

- **Eat healthy foods.**
 - » Choose fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, beans, and lean animal protein such as fish or chicken.
 - » Eat fewer processed foods.
 - » Limit foods high in saturated fat (animal fat) such as beef, cheese, and butter.
 - » Eat less sugar.
- **Avoid tobacco and nicotine.**
 - » If you use these products, make a plan to quit. Quitting can help lower your risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Quitting tobacco also helps lower blood pressure. High blood pressure is a risk factor for CAD. Quitting can be hard, but you can do it! There are many resources to help deal with the challenges of quitting. Talk to your doctor or Healthmap Solutions Care Navigator for more information on these resources.
- **Exercise regularly.**
 - » Regular physical activity keeps your mind and body healthy. Make sure to include strength training and exercises that raise your heart rate in your workout plan. Talk to your doctor before you start a new exercise program.
 - » Go to www.healthmapsolutions.com/patient-resources to download “Exercising for Health” for more workout tips.
- **Achieve and maintain a healthy weight.**
 - » Some people with CAD may need to lose weight. Losing just a few pounds may help lower cholesterol, blood sugar, and blood pressure. Exercising and eating a healthy diet are great first steps. Some medications can also help with weight loss. Talk to your doctor to see if these medications are right for you.



Medications

Patients with CAD may be prescribed medications to help protect the heart, such as:

- Medicines like aspirin that thin the blood to get through narrowed coronary arteries
 - » Don't take these medicines regularly without discussing with your doctor first.
- Statins or other medicines that lower cholesterol
 - » These can also lower the risk of heart attacks, strokes, and dying of heart disease.
- Medications that lower blood pressure
- Diabetes medications that help control blood sugar
- Medications that help with weight loss

Talk to your doctor to find out if any of these medications would be right for you.

Procedures

Some people with CAD may need medical procedures or treatment to improve blood flow to the heart. These include:

- **Coronary stent placement:** A small tube is placed in the artery to open a blockage.
- **Coronary artery bypass surgery:** A surgeon creates a new path for blood to flow around a blockage.
- **Cardiac rehabilitation:** This lifestyle therapy includes monitored exercise training, nutrition counseling, and stress management.

How can CAD and heart attacks be PREVENTED?

There are many healthy habits that can protect the heart and lower the risk of CAD, heart attacks, stroke, and other health problems. **Life's Essential 8™**, created by the American Heart Association, offers a list of guidelines for heart health:

1. Sleep 7 to 9 hours a night and practice sleep hygiene.
2. Exercise regularly.
3. Make healthy food choices. A low-fat, plant-based Mediterranean diet can be helpful.
 - » For more about this eating pattern, go to www.healthmapsolutions.com/patient-resources to download "The Mediterranean Eating Style."
4. Maintain a healthy body weight. Sometimes medication is needed to help.
5. Don't use tobacco or nicotine. If you do, work on quitting.
6. Control blood pressure.
7. Control cholesterol.
8. Control blood sugar.



Keep Your Medical Appointments

It's important to see your doctor regularly if you have CAD. This will ensure that you receive the necessary tests and treatments to protect your heart. If you have other conditions, you may need to see more than one doctor. Talk to your Healthmap Solutions Care Navigation team member if you need help keeping track of your appointments.

To learn more about managing your heart health, call Healthmap at **1-800-481-0474 (TTY: 711)**. Patients must meet program requirements to access Healthmap services.



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