



# Coronary Artery Disease

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## Condition Basics

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### What is coronary artery disease?

Coronary artery disease, or heart disease, is a heart problem that happens when fatty deposits called plaque (say "plak") build up inside coronary arteries (See figure 1 in appendix) of your heart. Those are the blood vessels that supply blood and oxygen to your heart muscle. This process of plaque buildup is called hardening of the arteries, or atherosclerosis.

Plaque buildup (See figure 2 in appendix) may reduce blood flow to the heart muscle. Like any muscle, the heart needs blood to work well. Poor blood flow can cause angina symptoms, such as chest pain or pressure. If the plaque breaks apart, it can cause a heart attack.

### What causes it?

Coronary artery disease is caused by a process called hardening of the arteries, or atherosclerosis. Fatty deposits called plaque build up inside coronary arteries. These arteries supply blood to the heart muscle. Over time, the plaque buildup may narrow the arteries and reduce blood flow to the heart muscle.

### What are the symptoms?

The symptoms of coronary artery disease are angina and shortness of breath. Angina can feel like chest pain or pressure. Some people feel pain, pressure, or a strange feeling in the back, neck, jaw, or upper belly, or in one or both shoulders or arms. Symptoms typically happen when the heart works hard.

### How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask about your medical history and do a physical exam. You may have tests to check how well your heart is working and to see if your arteries are narrowed. Examples of tests include an electrocardiogram, an echocardiogram, stress tests, and a CT angiogram.

## How is coronary artery disease treated?

Coronary artery disease is treated with healthy lifestyle changes and medicine. Treatment focuses on lowering your risk for heart attack and stroke and managing your symptoms. Sometimes angioplasty or bypass surgery is done to improve blood flow to the heart.

## Credits

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## Appendix

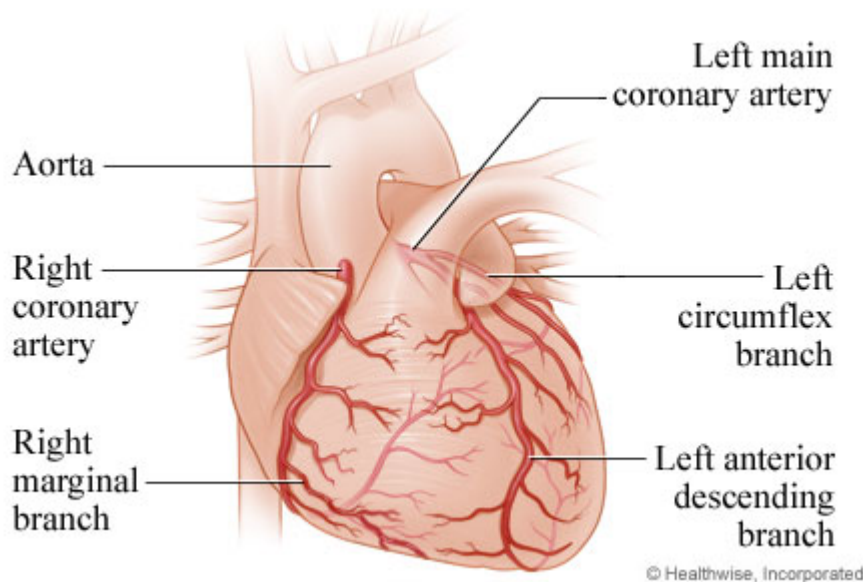
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### Topic Images

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Figure 1

#### The heart and the coronary arteries



Coronary arteries are blood vessels that provide oxygen-rich blood and other nutrients to the heart muscle. The coronary arteries attach to and wrap around the heart's surface.

The left coronary artery branches off into smaller arteries. The most prominent ones are the:

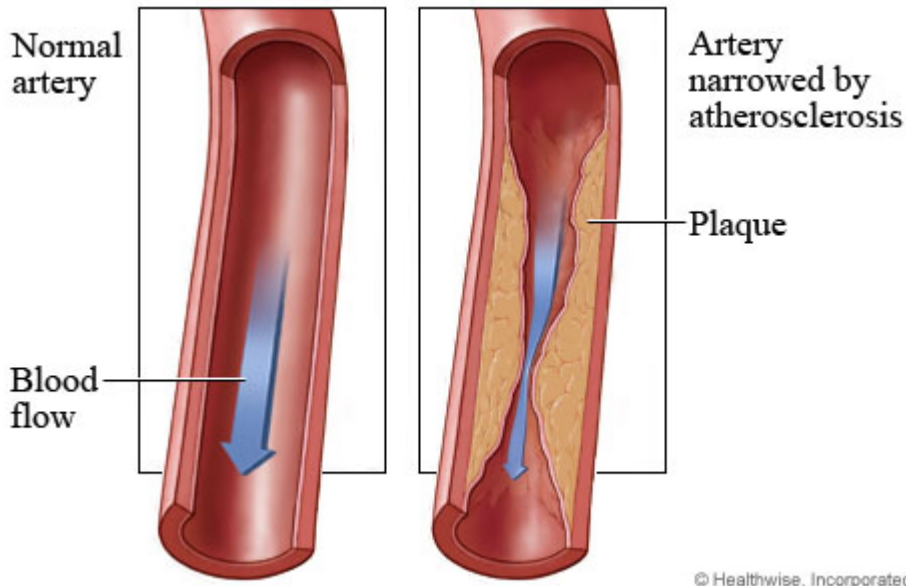
- Left anterior descending artery, which supplies blood to the front of the heart.
- Left circumflex artery, which encircles the heart muscle, supplying blood to the back of the heart.

The right coronary artery supplies the back of the heart. The right marginal branch usually extends from the

right coronary artery and supplies blood to the lower right side of the heart.

Figure 2

## Coronary artery disease



Coronary artery disease happens when fatty deposits called plaque (say "plak") build up inside your coronary arteries. This process of plaque buildup is called atherosclerosis.

Coronary arteries are the blood vessels that supply blood and oxygen to your heart muscle. Plaque buildup may reduce the amount of blood that gets to your heart. Coronary artery disease can cause angina symptoms, such as chest pain or pressure. It can lead to a heart attack. Treatment for coronary artery disease can help relieve symptoms and lower your risk of a heart attack.

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