



## Heart Health Fact Sheet

# Coronary Artery Disease



### What is CAD?

Coronary Artery Disease (CAD) is the accumulation of a substance called plaque in the coronary arteries. The coronary arteries are important as they supply blood to your heart. When the waxy-like substance plaque builds up, your arteries narrow in size and reduce blood flow to your heart muscle.

Blood clots could attach to the plaque on your narrow arteries, leading to a heart attack or angina; a condition where your heart receives less blood flow than needed and you can experience symptoms such as chest pain, sweating and dizziness.

#### What are the symptoms?

As discussed earlier, you may have no signs or symptoms of CAD for a number of years. However, the signs and symptoms of CAD can be similar to those of a heart attack, all of which require urgent medical attention:

- Chest pain
- Arm, jaw or shoulder pain
- Shortness of breath
- Sweating
- Rapid heartbeat/feelings of a fluttery chest
- Extreme fatigue
- Nausea
- Dizziness

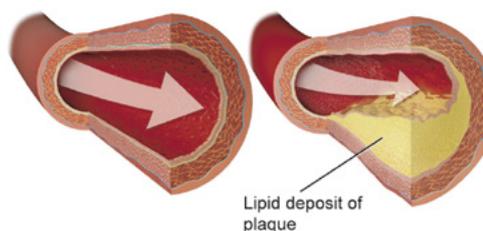
#### What are the causes?

It is important to understand the causes of CAD, as the more risk factors you have, the more likely you are to develop CAD:

- High cholesterol levels in your blood
- High blood pressure, also known as hypertension
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Isolation and depression
- Lack of physical activity
- Excess body weight
- Menopause
- Polycystic Ovarian Syndrome (PCOS)

Normal Artery

Narrowing of Artery



# Heart Health Fact Sheet

## CAD



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### What are the statistics?

CAD was the leading cause of death for Australians, accounting for around 11.6% of all deaths in 2017.

CAD is the second leading cause of death for Australian women, taking nearly 3x more women than breast cancer.

Worldwide, it is estimated that CAD is responsible for at least one-third of deaths amongst women.

### What are the treatments?

Here are some of the potential treatment options for CAD:

**Stenting:** If the blood flow in your coronary artery is blocked or you continue to suffer chest pain even when taking medications, you may need a stent (a tiny tube made of mesh) placed inside your coronary artery to help it open and restore blood flow.

**Bypass surgery:** Depending on your CAD condition, your doctor may recommend bypass surgery if you have more than one blockage in your coronary arteries or if other treatments have not yet worked.

**Medications:** Here are some of the potential medications you may take:

o **Statins:** These medications help you manage high cholesterol. Some of the trade names include Crestor and Lipitor.

o **Antiplatelets:** These medications are useful in preventing heart attacks as well as complications post an event. Some names of these medications include Aspirin and Ticagrelor (Brilinta).

o **Blood pressure medications:** These medications classes include ACE-inhibitors (such as Coversyl), aiming to reduce blood pressure.

o **Beta-blockers:** Beta-blockers such as Atenolol and Metoprolol are designed to relax your heart rate, however they can also have blood-pressure lowering effects.

o **Short-acting nitrates:** Often used if you have chest discomfort, these medications work on relaxing your coronary arteries to allow blood flow. These medications can be available as tablets taken under the tongue or in a spray; often these are known as GTN.

**Lifestyle changes:** Some of the basic and easy everyday changes you could make to improve your lifestyle include regular exercise, eating a healthy diet as well as quitting smoking.

**Follow-up treatment:** It is recommended that you continue having regular appointments with your doctors to discuss how you're feeling and managing your CAD. Another great idea could be to attend a cardiac rehabilitation program to help you learn how to manage your CAD and make the appropriate lifestyle changes as well as meet other people with CAD.

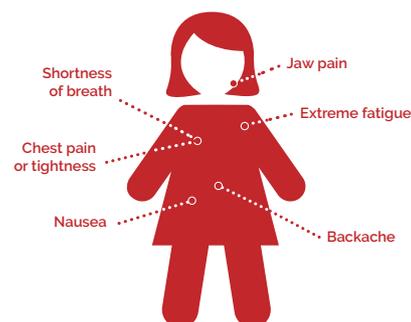
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# 3X

more women than breast cancer.

### Heart Attack Signs in Women

Warning signs differ between men and women. Women's symptoms include chest discomfort which radiates up to the throat, jaw and through to the back and shoulder blades, extreme fatigue, shortness of breath, heart fluttering, light-headedness and nausea.



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RESOURCES



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HEART HEALTH  
CHECKLIST

For up to date resources, personal stories and information visit

REAL LIFE STORIES

### Resources

**AUS** <https://www.heartsupport.org.au/>

**US** <https://www.womenheart.org/find-support/>

**UK** <https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/support/heart-support-groups>

**Canada** <https://cwhhc.ottawaheart.ca/programs-and-services/womenheart-program>