



Heart Health Fact Sheet

Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD)



Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (also known as SCAD) is where the coronary arteries which supply blood to your heart can develop a tear in their inner layer. Blood can then seep into the different layers of your arteries, resulting in a potential blockage, which can slow down and block the flow of blood to your heart. This tear can be problematic as it may result in heart conditions including rhythm issues, chest pain/angina, heart attack as well as death.

WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

The signs and symptoms of SCAD 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?

The causes of SCAD are still not as clearly known as other heart diseases; however, there are some conditions or factors which have been linked to incidence of SCAD.

These factors include:

- Conditions affecting blood vessels, including a condition called fibromuscular dysplasia
- Being female
- Pregnancy and birth
- Use of recreational drugs
- Major emotional stress
- Major exercise
- Inflammatory medical conditions such as rheumatoid arthritis and lupus
- Hormonal therapies
- Disorders affecting connective tissue including Marfan syndrome
- Dizziness

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WHAT ARE THE STATISTICS?

The Victor Chang Institute suggests that SCAD is the cause of 24% of cases for heart attack in women aged less than 50, as well as accounting for 2-4% of the overall presentation of acute coronary syndrome (where there is a sudden loss of blood flow to the heart). Research also suggests that it is the main cause of heart attack in pregnant women, occurring in 43% of cases.

WHAT ARE THE TREATMENTS?

Typically, medication is the preferred course of treatment. **If your SCAD does not heal naturally, treatment options include:**

- **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 SCAD condition, your doctor may recommend bypass surgery if you have more than one tear in your arteries, or if other treatments have not yet worked.
- **Medications:** There are medications which your doctor may recommend you take. These medications include blood-thinners to prevent any clots forming in your torn coronary artery, as a prevention for other cardiac issues, cholesterol medications if you have a higher cholesterol reading, blood pressure medications to reduce the pressure on your torn artery as well as medications to manage chest pain.
- **Follow-up treatment:** Cardiac rehabilitation, reviewing any family medical history to assess if there are any genetic predispositions for SCAD, as well as scans to look at other arteries to prevent new SCADs developing.

RESOURCES

- [Australian SCAD Survivors is a Facebook support group for people who have survived SCAD](#)
- [The Victor Chang Cardiac Research Institute is running the first Australian SCAD survivors research group, as well as providing research updates on SCAD.](#)
- [SCAD Research Australia is a not-for-profit organisation which provides desperately needed funds for research into SCAD](#)



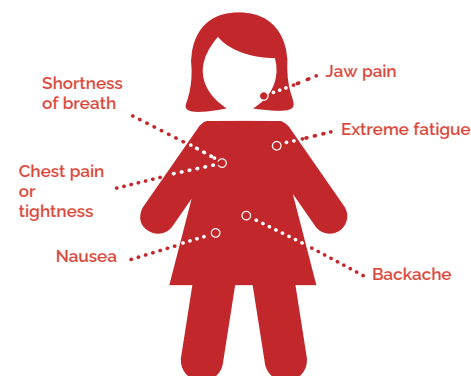
SCAD is the cause of

24%

of cases for heart attack women

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.



HER HEART RESOURCES



HEART HEALTH CHECKLIST



REAL STORIES



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