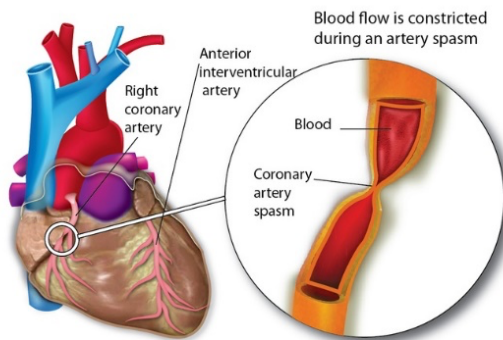


What is Coronary Artery Spasm?



Coronary Artery Spasm, or Variant Angina, or Prinzmetal's Angina or Vasospastic Angina are all different names for the same thing.

The coronary arteries are the larger arteries in the heart. They can spasm, which means that the arteries get tighter then relax. Because the arteries spasm, the blood cannot get to the rest of the heart.

Coronary Artery Spasms can happen to men and to women. They can happen when you are resting and doing nothing and can come from nowhere. They also often happen during the early morning hours and may wake you from sleep.

What it feels like to have Coronary Artery Spasms

There are lots of symptoms you might have with Coronary Artery Spasm. Below are just a few of these. Sometimes other symptoms can happen too.



Feeling sudden really bad chest pain, pressure, squeezing or



Feeling short of breath when you've not been exercising or even just sitting



Feeling suddenly dizzy, sick and becoming sweaty

When the spasm stops, a lot of the time the pain can go away quickly. You might feel tired and bruised for a few days after bad spasms. Heart attacks sometimes happen if the Coronary Artery Spasm happens for a long time. It is very important to let someone know or get medical help if you have these symptoms.

Sometimes symptoms like these can happen and it is not a problem with your heart.

There are some things that can start or trigger a Coronary Artery Spasm episode, and these can sometimes include –



- Stress
 - Feeling stressed, anxious or worried.



- Cold weather
 - A change in weather, cold weather, or breathing in cold air.



- Strong emotions
 - Being really sad, really angry or really happy can sometimes set off spasms.



- Alcohol
 - Drinking lots of alcohol for a long time (alcohol abuse) or stopping drinking lots of alcohol (alcohol withdrawal) can sometimes start off a Coronary Artery Spasm.



- Spicy food or caffeine
 - Sometimes, but not very often, eating spicy food or drinking coffee can set off spasms. It may help by choosing milder foods and trying decaffeinated tea and coffee instead.



- Sometimes we don't know why
 - Coronary Artery Spasms can come from nowhere, even when you are sitting comfortably, resting.

Remember, Coronary Artery Spasms often happen very early the morning and can sometimes wake you from sleep.

Having these symptoms may make you feel anxious, especially if you have not had them before or if they are different to the symptoms that you usually feel.



- If you have chest pain that is really bad, or worrying, or that does not go away after around 15 minutes (including after using GTN spray if available), you should always get medical advice as quickly as you can.

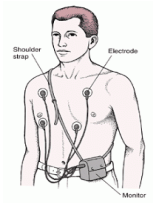


- This may mean calling for an ambulance or getting someone who is with you to call an ambulance for you.

Tests you might have



At hospital you may be given an ECG (Electrocardiogram) and blood tests. These are needed to see if your heart is working ok. A heart doctor (cardiologist) might want you to go for some other tests to see if you have Coronary Artery Spasm. This might include a blood test. It can sometimes be quite hard to test for Coronary Artery Spasm.



- **Ambulatory ECG**

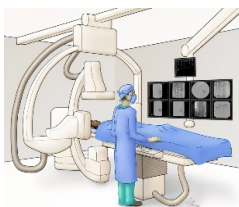
This means wearing ECG leads for a few days and nights to try and catch a Coronary Artery Spasm when it is happening.

- **Stress test (Echocardiogram, MRI, PET/nuclear scan or treadmill exercise)**



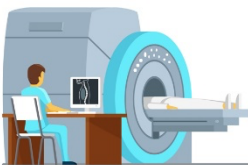
- Your heart rate is made to go faster in this test. This can be done by you doing some exercise while the test is going, or by having a chemical injected into your arm to make your heart beat faster. The test will show the doctors what happens to your heart when it works hard.

- **Coronary Angiogram**



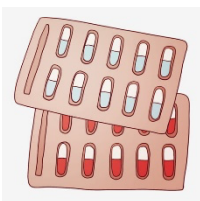
- This test is usually done to find out if you have any blockages in the blood vessels. A special, tiny wire is put inside a vein and goes to your heart. A special dye is used so that the doctor can see what is going on in your heart. The angiogram may involve other tests too, to see how the blood arteries in your heart are working. This is called a 'Functional Coronary Angiogram'.

- **Cardiac MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) or PET (Positron Emission Tomography) Scan**



- These scans are different to an angiogram. You will have a chemical injected into your arm to make your heart work harder. The scan lets the doctor see what is happening to the heart muscle when the heart is made to work harder.

How is Coronary Artery Spasm Treated?



There are lots of medications used to help make the symptoms of Coronary Artery Spasm feel a little better, including calcium channel blockers as well as slow and fast acting nitrates. Sometimes beta-blocker medications may make the spasms worse, but sometimes beta blockers can help make the symptoms a little better. It is important to know that everyone is different and may need different medications.



All these medications could help make your symptoms a little better by helping the blood flow to the heart. Some of the medications lower blood pressure and can help to protect your heart from long lasting harm.

Things that can help to try and stop symptoms of Coronary Artery Spasm from happening and can help to keep blood vessels and arteries healthy are medicines and changes in lifestyle too.



Changes in lifestyle are also a good way to help make Coronary Artery Spasm Symptoms a little better. They can also sometimes help to stop symptoms from happening.



- Smoking can damage the inside of blood vessels, and arteries so stopping smoking is an important thing you can do.



- Staying at a healthy weight might also help your symptoms.



- Having a healthy diet, cutting back on spicy food and swapping to decaffeinated drinks may help.



- Not having as much alcohol or stopping drinking alcohol.



- Doing regular exercise.



- Having good sleep and keeping stress levels low can also help.



Making healthy choices and things that help keep stress levels low by doing things like yoga, meditation or Tai Chi, can help angina symptoms be a little better and can help you feel healthier too.

PLEASE NOTE: Nothing in these summary sheets should be taken in any way as advice or recommendation. All information contained in these sheets is an opinion only and is shared here only in the hope that is of interest to other patients and medical professionals. Always talk with your own doctor before trying any new medications or therapies and before changing any of your current routines.