

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 the blood vessels get tighter then relax. Because the artery spasms, the blood cannot get to where it is needed past where the spasm is happening. Coronary Artery Spasms can happen at any time, including during rest.

Coronary Artery Spasm is found to happen more in women than men.

What it feels like to have Coronary Artery Spasm.

There are lots of symptoms you might have with Coronary Artery Spasm.

Below are just a few of these. Sometimes other less common symptoms may happen too.



Chest pain, squeezing or discomfort sometimes spreading to arms, neck, jaw, back or stomach.



Pain can sometimes wake you from sleep or happen early in the morning.

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



- Stress
 - Feeling stressed, anxious or worried.



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



- Some medications



- Drinking lots of alcohol every day for a long time



- Smoking



- We don't know why.
 - Sometimes a Coronary Artery Spasm episode can come from nowhere and can even happen when you are just sitting comfortably, resting

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



- If you have chest pain that is severe, or worrying, or that does not go away after around 15 minutes, 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.

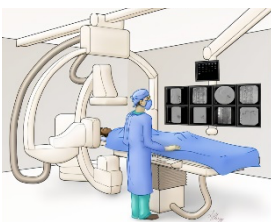
Tests you might have



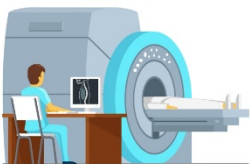
- At hospital you may be given an ECG (Electrocardiogram) and blood tests. These are needed to see if your heart is ok. A heart doctor (cardiologist) might want you to go for some tests to see if you have Microvascular Angina. This might include a blood test. It can sometimes be quite hard to test for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



- Stress Echocardiogram
 - 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 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.



- Cardiac MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) or PET (Positron Emission Tomography) Scan
 - These scans are different to the 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 tiny blood vessels in your heart.

How is Coronary Artery Spasm Treated?



- There are lots of medications used to help make the symptoms of Coronary Artery Spasm a little better.



- Changes in lifestyle can be a good way to help make Coronary Artery Spasm symptoms a little better.



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



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



- Having a healthy diet and be aware of how much alcohol you drink



- Doing regular exercise can help symptoms be a little better too.



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



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