Coronary Artery Disease (CAD): Symptoms, Diagnosis & Treatment

American Diabetes Association®

One of the most common types of heart disease is coronary artery disease (CAD). Over time, CAD can make the heart weak and lead to serious problems.

Some of the most common signs of CAD include:

- Shortness of breath
- Nausea
- Sweating
- Chest pain (angina)

About Chest Pain

The most common symptom of CAD is chest pain, sometimes mistaken for heartburn or indigestion. Chest pain can spread to the arms, shoulders, back and jaw. Chest pain also can feel like:

- Heaviness
- Tightness
- Pressure
- Aching
- Burning
- Numbness
- Fullness or squeezing

Diagnosis

If you have signs of CAD, your doctor will order tests to find out what the problem may be and how serious it is. These may include:

- Blood tests
- Chest X-ray
- Electrocardiogram (ECG or EKG): records your heart's activity while you sit quietly

Know the signs of coronary artery disease.

- Exercise EKG, or stress test: shows how your heart responds to physical activity
- Coronary angiogram: special type of X-ray that can show where your coronary arteries are blocked or narrowed

Treatment

CAD can be managed in several ways. Your doctor will recommend a treatment plan based on your symptoms, test results, medical history and future risks. This plan may include:

- Medications to relieve your chest pain
- Coronary bypass surgery
- Stenting to expand your coronary arteries and increase blood flow to your heart.

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