

What is it?

Giant Cell Arteritis, otherwise known as GCA, is inflammation of the lining of your arteries. Giant Cell Arteritis is also known as temporal arteritis because it can affect some of the arteries in your head, specifically the temporal arteries.



Stroke Prevention Clinic

Saskatoon:

P: 306-655-6802 | F: 306-655-6803

Regina:

P:306-766-3959 | F: 306-766-3968



For More Information

www.heartandstroke.ca

Mayo Clinic. (2022, Sept 21). *Giant Cell Arteritis*.
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/giant-cell-arteritis/symptoms-causes/syc-20372758>

Healthwise. (2023). <https://healthwise.org>



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Healthy People, Healthy Saskatchewan



Giant Cell Arteritis

Stroke Prevention Clinic

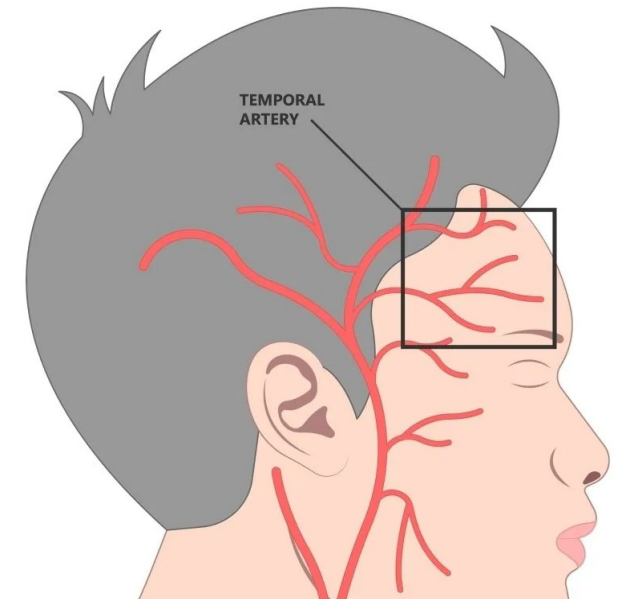


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Symptoms

Common symptoms of GCA include:

- persistent, severe headache (commonly in the temple area)
- scalp tenderness
- jaw pain
- vision loss
- double vision

Causes

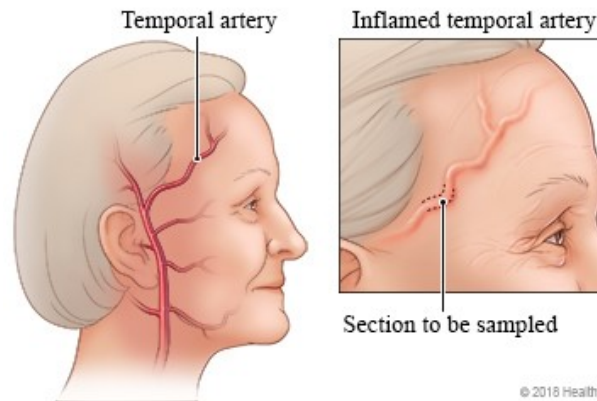
The cause of the artery inflammation is not known, but is thought to be related to the immune system attacking the arteries. Any artery can be affected, but the swelling most commonly occurs in the arteries around your temples. This inflammation can lead to swelling and clot formation, which can reduce vital blood flow providing oxygen and nutrients to the brain and eyes.

Risk Factors

Risk factors that increase your chance of developing GCA include:

- age 55 and up
- women have double the risk
- polymyalgia rheumatica
- family history

The Saskatchewan Health Authority works in the spirit of truth and reconciliation, acknowledging Saskatchewan as the traditional territory of First Nations and Métis People.



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Diagnosis

Most often a simple blood test can help lead to the diagnosis of GCA by performing two tests:

- **Erythrocyte Sediment Rate (ESR):** used to determine how quickly red blood cells fall to the bottom of a tube. A fast rate can indicate inflammation.
- **C-Reactive Protein (CRP):** this protein is produced when inflammation is present in the body.

Other tests may include: Doppler ultrasound, MRI/MRA, PET scan or biopsy.

Treatment

Treatment for GCA includes taking a high dose steroid, such as prednisone, for up to two years. Vision loss may not return to normal, but taking medications will help prevent further complications. If left untreated, Giant Cell Arteritis can have devastating complications such as:

- Blindness
- Aortic aneurysm
- Stroke

If at any time you are concerned about your symptoms, or they are unusual for you, please seek medical attention.