



Temporal Arteritis

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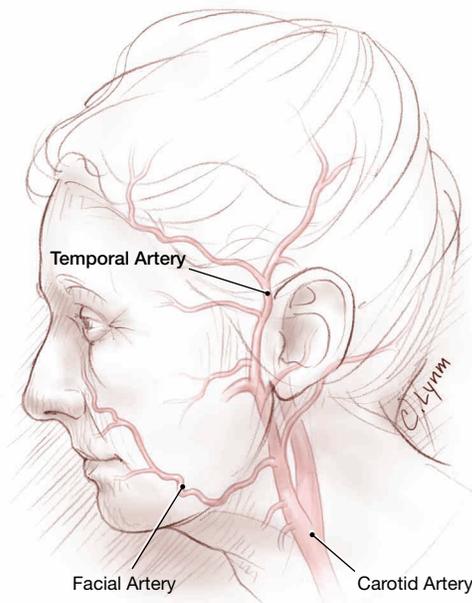
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Temporal Arteritis

Temporal arteritis (also called **cranial arteritis** or **giant cell arteritis**) is a disorder that causes **inflammation** (a response to cellular injury) of the temporal artery, which runs over the temple near the ear. Other **arteries** (blood vessels that transport oxygen in blood) may be affected, especially those that supply the head and eyes. Temporal arteritis occurs more often in women and almost exclusively in people older than 50 years.

In temporal arteritis, inflammation causes the arteries to become narrow, restricting blood flow in the head. It is a serious disease that varies in severity but can often be treated successfully. The exact cause of temporal arteritis is unknown, but it is thought to be an **autoimmune** reaction (one in which the immune system reacts inappropriately) in the lining of the arteries.

The June 12, 2002, issue of *JAMA* contains a report about a patient with temporal arteritis.



SYMPTOMS OF TEMPORAL ARTERITIS

Symptoms of temporal arteritis can vary among patients but often include

- Headache that may be mild or severe and may include throbbing
- Pain and tenderness in the area of the temples and scalp
- Blindness or blind spots in one eye or blurred or double vision
- Pain in the jaw, especially when chewing or speaking
- Pain and stiffness in the neck and shoulder
- Fatigue and weight loss
- Fever

Other less common symptoms include

- Sore tongue, mouth, or throat
- Dry cough

DIAGNOSING AND TREATING TEMPORAL ARTERITIS

Your doctor can diagnose temporal arteritis with a **biopsy**—removing and examining a small piece of an affected artery. He or she may check your **erythrocyte sedimentation rate**, a blood test that is usually abnormal in temporal arteritis.

Treatment is often effective and includes taking **corticosteroid** medication to act on the immune system. Starting treatment promptly is important to prevent permanent loss of vision. You may need to take medication for a long period to prevent the disease from recurring.

Sources: American Academy of Family Physicians, American Autoimmune Related Disease Association, Johns Hopkins Vasculitis Center, National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke, Royal National Institute of the Blind

FOR MORE INFORMATION

- National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke/National Institutes of Health
800/352-9424
www.ninds.nih.gov
- American Autoimmune Related Disease Association
800/598-4668
www.aarda.org

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