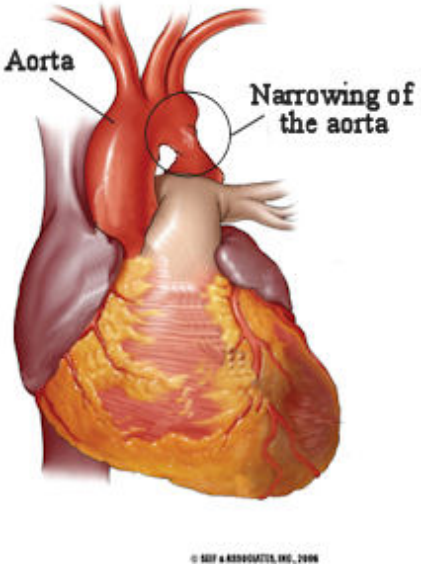
Takayasu Arteritis

Takayasu Arteritis is also known as “pulseless disease.” It is a rare condition that affects large blood vessels and causes inflammation (*vasculitis*) of these vessels. Takayasu Arteritis mainly affects the *aorta*, which is a large blood vessel that carries blood away from the heart. Areas of the aorta or other affected blood vessels can become narrowed, blocked, or weakened because of the inflammation. This causes reduced blood flow to important body organs and can result in many complications or even death.



CAUSES

The exact cause of Takayasu Arteritis is not known. It may be due to an *autoimmune disorder* where the body's defense system attacks its own cells. Takayasu Arteritis most commonly occurs in Asian females between the ages of 15-35.

SYMPTOMS

Takayasu Arteritis symptoms depend upon the blood vessels that are affected and may include:

- Light-headedness or fainting.
- Dizziness.
- Chest pain, especially during physical activity.
- Stroke-like symptoms such as:
  - Sudden weakness or numbness in your arms, legs, or face, especially on one side of the body.
  - Problems speaking or slurred speech.
  - Trouble walking or loss of balance.
  - Problems seeing or hearing.
  - Severe headache.
- High blood pressure.
- Arm pain, especially during physical activity.
- Pain in the abdomen, especially after eating.
- Joint pain or general muscle weakness.
- Fatigue or tiredness.
- Nausea and vomiting.
- Poor appetite.
- Weight loss.
- Fever.
- Night sweats.

DIAGNOSIS

Because Takayasu Arteritis is uncommon, diagnosis may not be immediate. Diagnosis usually does not occur until there are severe symptoms. You may have high blood pressure or there may be a difference in blood pressure readings between your right arm and left arm. Your caregiver may conduct the following tests to help diagnose Takayasu Arteritis:

- Chest x-ray.
- *Arteriogram*. This a test that uses x-rays and a special dye to look at the arteries.
- An MRI or CT scan. These are imaging tests that look at internal body organs.
- *CT Angiography*. This test combines an Arteriogram and a CT scan. CT angiography shows images of the blood vessels and arteries.
- *Magnetic Resonance Angiogram* (*MRA*). This test combines an MRI and an Arteriogram. MRA also shows images of the arteries.
- A Doppler ultrasound study to look at blood flow in the arteries and organs.
- Blood tests.

TREATMENT

- You may be treated with medicines such as:
  - Steroids to help reduce inflammation.

- Immunosuppressant's to inhibit or prevent the body's defense system from attacking itself.
- You may be treated with procedures such as:
  - *Angioplasty*, a procedure to help widen a narrowed or blocked blood vessel.
  - *Stent* placement, which is an expandable coil that is placed inside a narrowed blood vessel that helps to keep it open.

The treatment of Takayasu Arteritis can be very challenging. When there are many blood vessels that have narrowing, treatment may only be partially corrective.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- Follow all instructions given by your caregiver.
- Take all medicines as prescribed by your caregiver.
- Monitor your blood pressure and heart beat (*pulse*) at home.
- Schedule regular follow-ups with your caregiver.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your heart beat (*pulse*) is slower than before.
- You have trouble breathing.
- Your pain/ache worsens.
- Any of the above symptoms develop.
- Medication you are taking does not seem to help your symptoms.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have severe chest pain.
- Your breathing gets worse despite medicine you are taking.
- You experience stroke-like symptoms such as:
  - Sudden weakness or numbness in your arms, legs, or face, especially on one side of the body.
  - Problems speaking or slurred speech.
  - Trouble walking or loss of balance.
  - Problems seeing or hearing.
  - Severe headache.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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