

# What is SCAD?

## Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection

A tear or bruise in a coronary artery prevents normal blood flow. This can cause a heart attack, heart failure, cardiac arrest and can be fatal.

### What is SCAD?

Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD) is a rare heart condition that cannot be predicted or prevented – yet.

A tear or a bruise develops in a coronary artery resulting in a blockage that prevents normal blood flow and can cause heart attack, heart failure or cardiac arrest and can be fatal.

We don't yet know what causes SCAD. Some associations have been described with:

- ❑ Pregnancy and post-partum
- ❑ Menopause
- ❑ Fibromuscular Dysplasia (FMD)
- ❑ Connective tissue disorders
- ❑ Extreme stress
- ❑ Extreme exercise or emotional stress

Read more about current knowledge and emerging theories in the European Society of Cardiology SCAD Position Paper ([bit.ly/2FkRkMj](https://bit.ly/2FkRkMj)).

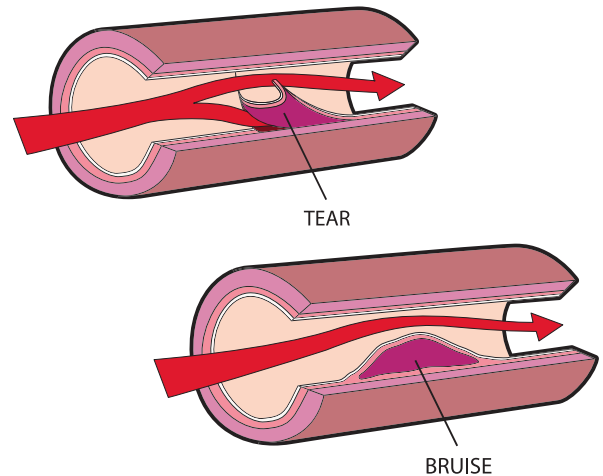
### Who gets SCAD?

SCAD has been reported across a wide age range (18-84 years) but the majority of cases are in young-to middle-aged women. SCAD patients have few or none of the traditional risk factors associated with heart disease (atherosclerosis). More research is needed to understand why fit, healthy people suddenly develop SCAD.

### Symptoms of SCAD

SCAD patients may have all or some of the following symptoms, however they are often misdiagnosed as anxiety.

- ❑ central chest pain
- ❑ arm pain or numbness
- ❑ pain in the jaw, back or shoulders
- ❑ nausea
- ❑ sweating/clamminess
- ❑ breathing difficulties



### How is SCAD diagnosed?

There are various diagnostic tools for cardiac events, including ECGs, angiograms and troponin tests. ECGs for SCAD patients may look normal, however, so should not be used as the only diagnostic tool. It is essential to do a baseline troponin test and then another one four hours later to diagnose a cardiac event.

### How is SCAD treated?

Treatments and medication will vary depending on the severity of the SCAD event and how much heart damage there is.

Conservative management (using just medication) is preferred where possible, but sometimes surgical intervention is required. This may include inserting stents or performing coronary artery bypass.

Most SCAD patients are given the medication normally prescribed to patients with heart disease caused by atherosclerosis, including aspirin, statins, blood pressure pills and beta blockers. SCAD researchers are investigating if this is the best protocol for SCAD patients.

### Does SCAD recur?

Yes, some patients have more than one SCAD. We don't know why this happens, nor is there any way to predict recurrence.

**44-53** average age of SCAD patients\*

**10%** of SCADs happen during or after pregnancy\*

**10%** of SCAD patients are men\*

\*European Society of Cardiology, SCAD study group Position Paper February 2018 [bit.ly/2FkRkmJ](http://bit.ly/2FkRkmJ).

### Louise's story

Louise was 50 when she had a SCAD. She had chest and arm pain, but her ECG looked normal. However, troponin tests showed she had had a heart attack.

**Read more... [beatscad.org.uk/louises-story](http://beatscad.org.uk/louises-story)**

### Robyn's story

Robyn was 27 when she had her SCAD two weeks after her third baby was born. Her family was told to prepare for the worst after she had a cardiac arrest.

**Read more... [beatscad.org.uk/robyns-story](http://beatscad.org.uk/robyns-story)**

### James' story

James was a runner, so his SCAD came as a complete shock. He was determined the heart attack wouldn't stop him, though, and he has returned to running.

**Read more... [beatscad.org.uk/james-story](http://beatscad.org.uk/james-story)**

## Beat SCAD

Beat SCAD was created by SCAD survivors who met on social media while trying to find support and information about SCAD. They helped initiate the UK research and Beat SCAD works closely with the research team.

Beat SCAD's vision is a world that understands SCAD, where those affected are quickly and accurately diagnosed and never feel alone.

Beat SCAD's mission is to:

- ❑ raise awareness of SCAD among medics, as well as SCAD patients, their family and friends
- ❑ provide support for SCAD patients, family and friends
- ❑ raise funds for research into SCAD

Beat SCAD believes it's important that first responders, paramedics, midwives, cardiac rehab nurses, GPs, cardiologists and other medical professionals are aware of SCAD diagnosis and treatment, so fit, healthy people with cardiac symptoms receive the best treatment without delay.

Beat SCAD is run entirely by volunteers and is dependent on the generosity of our supporters to continue pushing forward with our mission.

## Further information

### Beat SCAD

[beatscad.org.uk](http://beatscad.org.uk)  
[contactus@beatscad.org.uk](mailto:contactus@beatscad.org.uk)  
[facebook.com/beatscaduk](https://facebook.com/beatscaduk)  
Youtube: [bit.ly/1TXhiLV](http://bit.ly/1TXhiLV)

**UK SCAD research project** at the Leicester Biomedical Research Centre  
[scad.lcbru.le.ac.uk](http://scad.lcbru.le.ac.uk)

### Facebook groups

SCAD – UK & Ireland Survivors  
For SCAD patients [bit.ly/1Mizg9a](http://bit.ly/1Mizg9a)

SCAD Family and Friends Support Group  
[bit.ly/1TMQDwc](http://bit.ly/1TMQDwc)

### British Heart Foundation

[bit.ly/1LaOgys](http://bit.ly/1LaOgys)

### Fibromuscular Dysplasia Society of America

Information about FMD [fmdsa.org](http://fmdsa.org)



Registered charity number 1164066

## Other leaflets in this series:

- ❑ Diagnosed with SCAD?
- ❑ SCAD for health professionals
- ❑ Pregnancy-related SCAD case studies
- ❑ Helping children understand SCAD

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