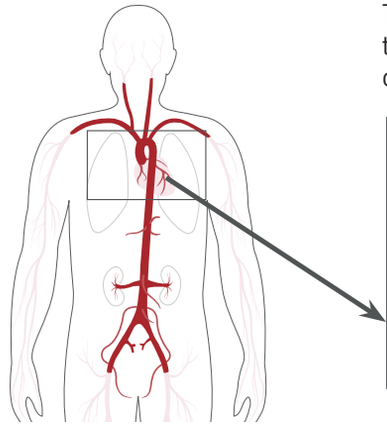
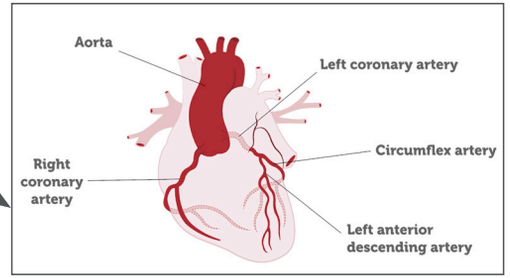
beat SCAD
Awareness | Support | Research

Information sheet

What we think happens in a coronary artery during a SCAD

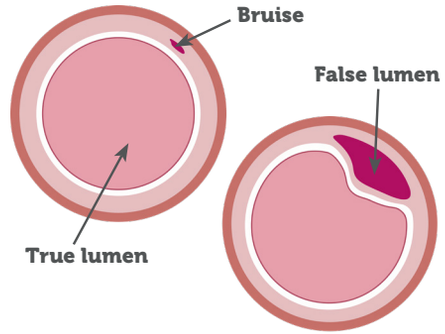


The heart is a muscle that pumps blood around the body. The coronary (heart) arteries take oxygenated blood to the heart muscles.

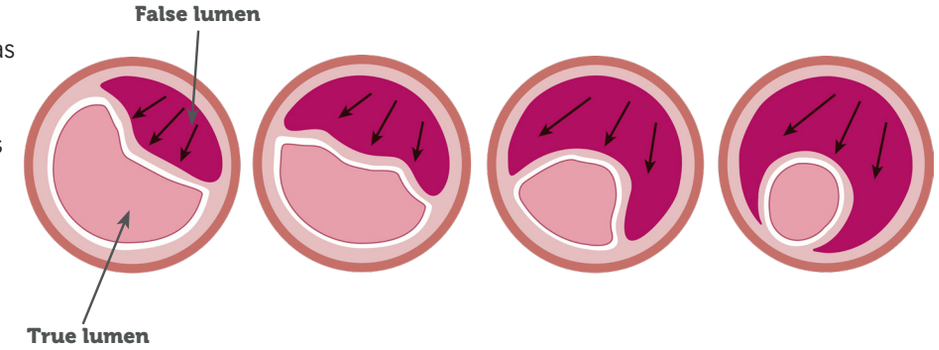


Blood normally flows through the true lumen in your coronary (heart) artery. During a SCAD, microvessels in the wall of the artery rupture and patients get a bruise or a bleed that builds up in the wall of a coronary artery and compresses the artery from the outside so the blood can't flow as normal to the heart muscle and this causes a heart attack.

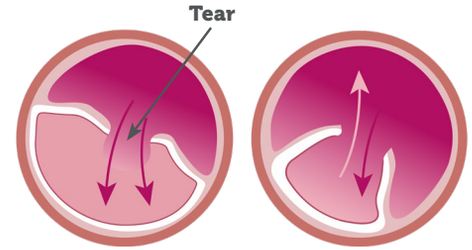
This is a coronary artery in cross-section showing how a SCAD begins with a bleed between the layers of the artery wall, creating a false lumen.



Sometimes as the pressure builds up the bruise tracks along the artery wall.



The pressure in the false lumen can lead to a fenestration or tear between the false lumen and the true lumen. While this depressurises the false lumen and can be a first step towards healing, the flap of arterial wall at the site of the fenestration can sometimes block or reduce blood flow in the true lumen.



Scan the QR code to watch a short video explaining SCAD.

What is SCAD?

Awareness of SCAD is not universal among healthcare professionals, so it's important for SCAD patients to get well informed and learn to advocate for themselves.

Self-advocate

Here is the artery in a longitudinal view, showing how the bruise builds up in the wall of a coronary artery and compresses it from the outside.