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Information sheet

Jargon buster

A guide to medical terms relating to the heart and SCAD

Arteries of the heart

Arteries are blood vessels that carry blood away from the heart.

Veins are blood vessels that carry deoxygenated blood towards the heart.

LAD The Left Anterior Descending artery supplies blood to the front of the left side of the heart.

LCA The Left Coronary Artery supplies blood to the left side of the heart.

LCx The Left Circumflex Artery supplies blood to the side and back of the heart.

RCA The Right Coronary Artery supplies blood to the bottom and side of the heart.

PDA The Posterior Descending Artery branches off the RCA.

PLV The posterior left ventricular wall branch also comes of the RCA.

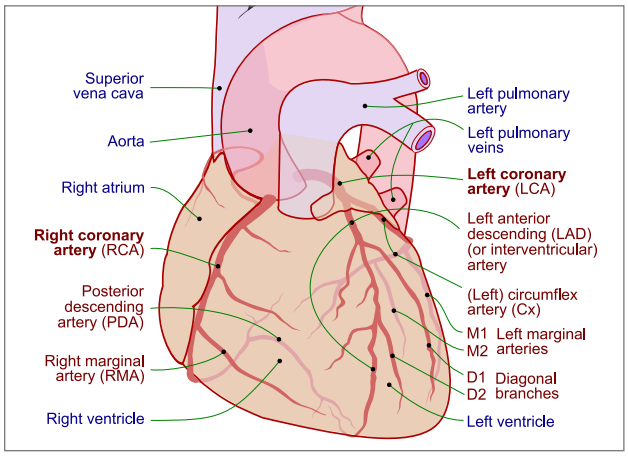
Plus **Marginal** and **Diagonal** branches

Anatomy of the heart

Anterior The front of the heart

Aorta The largest artery in the body. It carries oxygenated blood away from the heart to vessels that take oxygenated blood to the rest of the body.

Apex The pointed tip at the bottom of the heart.



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Atrium The upper chamber of each side of your heart (the left atrium and right atrium).

Distal The part of the artery further away from the top of the heart.

Posterior The back of the heart.

Proximal The part of the artery closest to the top of the heart.

Pulmonary arteries Carry deoxygenated blood from the right side of the heart to the lungs.

Pulmonary veins Transfer oxygenated blood from the lungs to the heart.

Septum A muscular wall that separates the heart's left and right sides.

Ventricle The lower chamber of each side of your heart (the left ventricle and right ventricle).

Medical terms

Aneurysm A section of a blood vessel wall bulges outwards due to a weakness in the wall

Angina Chest pain caused by reduced blood flow to the heart muscles. Pain may also be felt in your arms, neck, jaw, back and stomach.

Angiogram A type of X-ray used to look at blood vessels. A catheter is inserted in an artery via your wrist or groin and a dye is injected through this catheter to highlight the blood vessels. X-rays are taken of your vessels and this can identify how blood is flowing and any narrowing of the vessels.

Angioplasty A procedure that uses a 'balloon' or stent to open up a narrowed or blocked artery to restore or allow improved blood flow to widen blocked or narrowed coronary arteries (the main blood vessels supplying the heart).

Atherosclerosis The commonest cause of heart attacks. A heart disease where 'plaque' (altered cholesterol and inflammatory cells) develops in the arterial wall, resulting in them becoming narrowed, reducing blood flow and oxygen supply to your body. Blood clots can form in the arteries, blocking blood flow and leading to heart attacks.

Atrial fibrillation (AF) Abnormal heart rhythm.

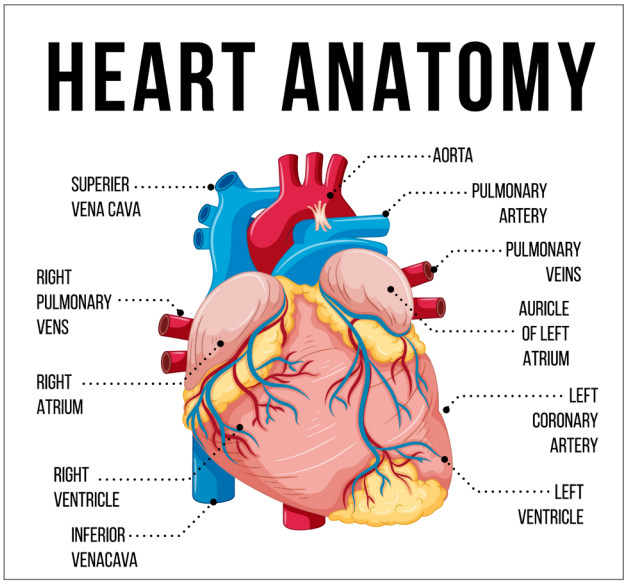
Blood pressure The force exerted by blood in the arteries as it circulates. Pressures are measured with two figures, eg 120/70, where 120 is systolic (when the heart contracts) and 70 diastolic (when the heart is filling.

Cardiac arrest When the heart stops beating suddenly and breathing and other body functions stop as a result.

Cardiac rehabilitation A programme to help you recover after a heart attack. It can include education/information on lifestyle, eg nutrition, as well as monitored exercise sessions.See the BHF for more (tinyurl.com/5fff2ytm).

Catheter A very thin, flexible tube used to perform angiograms.

Coronary artery bypass surgery Surgery that uses arteries or veins from elsewhere in the body to bypass a blocked or narrowed coronary artery to restore blood flow.



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Coronary spasm Repeated contractions and dilations of the coronary arteries, causing a lack of blood supply to the heart muscle.

CT Angiogram Computerised tomography angiogram. This is a less invasive type of angiogram where a dye is injected into a vein in your arm and a CT scanner takes images of your heart to see what the blood flow is like and find any narrowings or blockages.

ECG (Electrocardiogram) A test to look at your heart's rate, rhythm and electrical activity.

Echocardiogram A scan of the heart and blood vessels using a type of ultrasound scan to check the structure of the heart and blood vessels, look at the blood flow and how the heart is pumping.

Ejection fraction (EF) The amount of blood a heart pumps with each beat. A normal EF range is 55-65%. An EF below 40% indicates a degree of heart failure.

Exercise Stress Test A test used to find out how the heart responds to stress. It usually involves walking on a treadmill or pedalling a stationary bike at increasing levels of difficulty, while the ECG, heart rate and blood pressure are monitored.

GTN spray Glyceryl Trinitrate medication that helps relax the walls of blood vessels to improve the blood supply to your heart.

Heart attack (Myocardial Infarction, MI) A loss of blood flow to part of the heart muscle. A blocked coronary artery can lead to heart

muscle damage and/or cardiac arrest. At the moment, damage to heart muscle is permanent and cannot be reversed. Time is muscle.

Heart failure A condition where the heart has become less efficient at pumping blood round the body, sometimes as a result of muscle damage due to a heart attack. More info at the BHF (tinyurl.com/bddy3ejv).

High blood pressure (Hypertension) When the pressure needed to pump blood round your body is higher than the recommended range, putting extra strain on your heart and blood vessels.

ICD (Implantable Cardioverter Defibrillator) A device under the skin of your chest, connected to your heart to monitor your heart rhythm and, if it becomes abnormal, it can deliver an electric shock to bring your heart back to a normal rhythm.

Ischemia When there is not enough oxygen-rich blood supplied to the heart muscle to meet the heart's needs.

MI (Myocardial Infarction) see Heart attack.

MRI (Magnetic Resonance Imaging) A non-invasive test that creates images of organs including your heart and blood vessels.

MRA (Magnetic resonance angiography) A type of MRI scan that looks at blood vessels. Sometimes a dye is injected into your bloodstream to make the vessels easier to see.

Pacemaker A device under the skin of your chest that monitors the heart's electrical signals and can stimulate the heart muscles if needed to beat normally.

Palpitation A fluttering sensation in the chest often related to a missed heart beat or rapid heartbeat.

PCI (percutaneous coronary intervention) The use of angioplasty and stents to open up a narrowed or blocked artery to restore or allow improved blood flow.

SCAD (Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection) A bruise or a tear in the wall of a coronary artery the reduces or prevents blood flow. This can lead to heart muscle damage, heart failure, cardiac arrest and can be fatal.

Statins Medicine to reduce cholesterol levels in the blood.

STEMI or ST-elevation MI A heart attack that is caused by a prolonged period of blocked blood supply. An area of the heart muscle is affected, causing changes on the ECG and chemical markers in the blood, usually implying that the full thickness of the heart muscle was affected in the heart attack, causing that part of the muscle to die.

Stenosis A narrowing, eg of a coronary artery.

Stent A tiny mesh tube inserted into an artery during angioplasty to improve blood flow through an artery.

Transmural The full depth of the artery wall.

Troponin A type of protein found in the muscles of your heart. Troponin isn't normally found in the blood, but when heart muscles become damaged, troponin gets into the bloodstream. As heart damage increases, higher amounts of troponin are released in the blood.

Heart medication

Anti-coagulant Medication to treat blood clots or help prevent blood clots from forming.

Anti-platelets (eg aspirin, clopidogrel, Ticagrelor, Praugrel). Prolong bleeding time reducing the chances of clotting.

Beta-Blocker (names usually end in '…olol' eg bisoprolol). Slows the heart rate and lowers blood pressure, reducing the amount of work the heart needs to do. Good for more damaged hearts.

ACE Inhibitors (names usually end in '…pril' eg ramapril). Used to control/reduce blood pressure. Supports more damaged hearts. Similar drugs ARBs (names end in '…sartan e.g. Losartan) are an alternative in some patients

Calcium-Channel Blocker (eg Amlodipine or Diltiazem). Dilate arteries, lower blood pressure and control angina by blocking the uptake of calcium by heart muscle and vessels.

More info on the BHF website tinyurl.com/49jptxs3