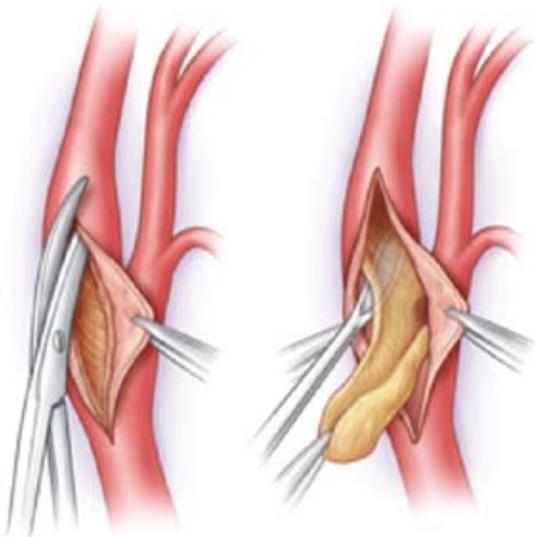


How is Carotid Artery Disease (CAD) treated?

Treatment will depend on the severity of your condition, and whether or not you are having symptoms from the carotid artery disease. As a first step, your vascular surgeon may recommend medications (eg aspirin and statins) and lifestyle changes (*see back of brochure*).

You may require surgery if your carotid artery disease is severe, for example, if you have TIA symptoms, experienced a stroke in the past, or just have a severely narrowed carotid artery even without symptoms.

During surgery, your vascular surgeon removes the plaque that is blocking your carotid artery. The procedure is called carotid endarterectomy and can be performed using a local or general anesthetic, depending upon the particular situation. An incision is made in your neck and the plaque is removed from the inner lining of your carotid artery. This procedure leaves a smooth, wide-open artery.



Angioplasty and Stenting

Your vascular surgeon may insert a long, thin tube called a catheter through a small puncture site over a groin artery and guide it through your blood vessels to your carotid artery. A tiny metal-mesh tube called a stent is placed in the artery to hold it open. Carotid angioplasty and stenting is currently controversial because conclusive, long-term results are not yet available. Nevertheless, for patients who have serious medical conditions that increase the risk of carotid endarterectomy, angioplasty and stenting may be a good alternative.

What can I do to stay healthy?

Lifestyle changes that help you manage your leg artery disease include:

- **Managing Diabetes**
- **Lowering High Cholesterol**
- **Lowering High Blood Pressure**
- **Quitting Smoking**
- **Healthy Eating**
- **Maintaining Ideal Body Weight**
- **Regular Walking & Exercise**



CAROTID ARTERY
DISEASE (CAD)

TRANSIENT ISCHEMIC
ATTACKS (TIAs)

STROKE



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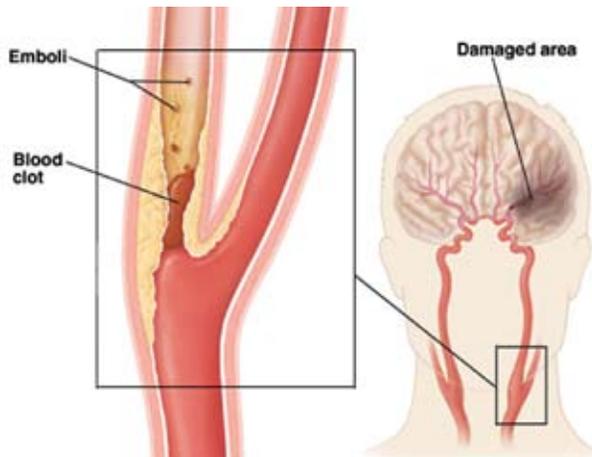


Q&A

What is Carotid Artery Disease (CAD)?

Carotid artery disease occurs when the major arteries in your neck become narrowed or blocked. The carotid arteries, supply your brain with blood. Your carotid arteries extend from your aorta in your chest to the brain inside your skull.

Your arteries are normally smooth and unobstructed on the inside, but as you age, a sticky substance called plaque can build up in the walls of your arteries. Plaque is made up of cholesterol, calcium, and fibrous tissue. As more plaque builds up, your arteries narrow and stiffen. This process is called **atherosclerosis**, or hardening of the arteries.



Some plaque deposits are soft and are prone to cracking or forming roughened, irregular areas inside the artery. A piece of the plaque itself, or a clot, can break off from the plaque deposit and travel through your bloodstream and lodge in a smaller artery in your brain, blocking it and causing a stroke.

What causes Carotid Artery Disease (CAD)?

Atherosclerosis is the main cause of CAD. Therefore, factors that increase your chances of developing the disease include:

- **Smoking**
- **Diabetes**
- **High Blood Pressure**
- **High Cholesterol or Homocysteine**

In rare cases, other conditions known as carotid aneurysm disease and fibromuscular dysplasia can also cause carotid artery disease.

What are the symptoms?

Carotid artery disease may not cause symptoms in its early stages (Asymptomatic).

Unfortunately, the first sign of carotid artery disease could be a stroke. However, you may experience warning symptoms of a stroke called transient ischemic attacks, or TIAs. Symptoms of a TIA usually last for a few minutes to 24 hours and include:

- **Feeling weakness, numbness, or a tingling sensation on one side of your body, for example, in an arm or a leg**
- **Being unable to control the movement of an arm or a leg**
- **Losing vision in one eye**
- **Being unable to speak clearly (slurred speech)**

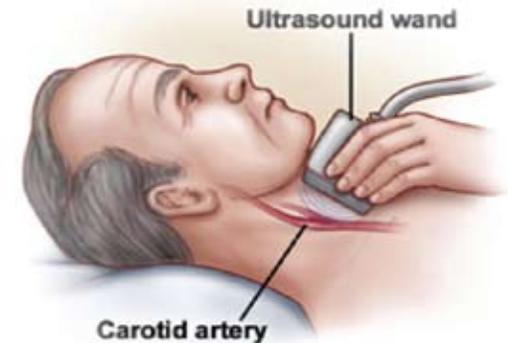
These symptoms usually go away completely within 24 hours. Having a TIA means that you are at serious risk of a stroke in the near future. **You should report TIA symptoms to your physician immediately.**

If you experience the above symptoms for longer than 24 hours, a stroke has probably occurred. **You should contact your physician immediately.**

What tests will I need?

First your physician asks you questions about your general health, medical history, and symptoms. In addition, your physician conducts a physical exam. Together these are known as a patient history and exam.

If your physician suspects that you have carotid artery disease, a carotid duplex ultrasound will be ordered. In this painless test, a small ultrasound probe is placed on your neck. The probe emits high-frequency sound waves that bounce off of blood cells and blood vessels to show blood flow and problems with the structure of blood vessels. This test can demonstrate the presence of plaque.



If ultrasound does not provide enough information, your physician may order a CT scan, MRI scan or angiogram.