



Women Living with Coronary Artery Disease (CAD)

Get the Care You Need

If you've been living with coronary artery disease (CAD) for a while, you probably know that it can cause a heart attack or heart failure. That's especially true if you don't get the treatment you need.

The good news is that you can take steps to advocate for yourself and make sure you're getting the treatment you need to be as healthy as possible.

Advocate for Yourself

Learn about your treatment options. You can manage CAD with lifestyle changes and different types of medicines. Treatment for CAD can also include:

- **Percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI)** — a procedure that uses a stent (a small tube) or balloon to open a blocked artery in your heart
- **Coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG)** — a type of open-heart surgery that creates a new path for blood to flow around blocked arteries in your heart

Ask your doctor questions to help make sure you're getting the care you need. For example:

- Why do you recommend my current treatment plan?
- Are there other medicines, diets, or activities that might help me?
- Can you tell me about PCI? Is that an option for me?
- Am I eligible for a clinical trial?



Women and CAD

CAD is the leading cause of death for women, and it affects 1 in 16 women in the United States.¹ Women may have different CAD symptoms than men — like jaw or lower back pain. This means it can take longer for women to get the treatment they need.

¹[cdc.gov/heartdisease/women.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/women.htm)

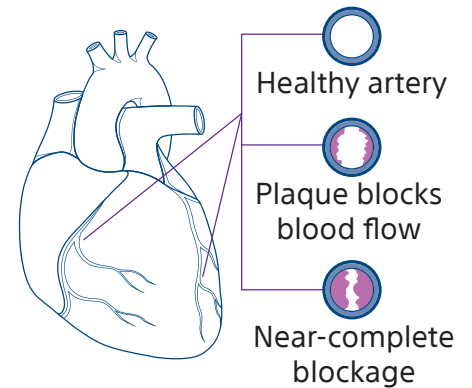
Keep up with your medical appointments. But keep in mind that you have the right to get care from a doctor you trust — someone who takes your symptoms seriously, listens to your opinions, and answers all of your questions.

If you're feeling unsure about your care, ask for a second opinion from another doctor.

Make your own health a priority. Women often serve in a caregiving role. But it's important to take care of yourself, too — for example, by calling your doctor if you have a new symptom or something doesn't feel right.

Bring a family member or friend with you to your medical appointments. They can offer emotional support, help you ask questions, and take notes.

Ask your doctor to recommend a support group for people with heart conditions. You might find it helpful to talk with other people who are experiencing the same things as you.



CAD happens when plaque (made up of cholesterol and fat) builds up in the arteries that carry blood to your heart. This causes the arteries to narrow and blocks blood from flowing — so less blood gets to your heart muscle.



And remember, a heart attack is **always** a medical emergency — call 911 if you think you're having one. Keep in mind that women are more likely than men to have symptoms besides chest pain — like back pain or throwing up. Read about other heart attack symptoms:

[cdc.gov/heartdisease/heart_attack.htm](https://www.cdc.gov/heartdisease/heart_attack.htm)