

Temporal Arteritis

What is temporal arteritis?

Temporal arteritis (also known as giant cell arteritis) is an inflammatory condition of some arteries. It is more common in older people, particularly women, and is rare in patients under the age of 60. The cause is unknown, but there is an association with another inflammatory condition called polymyalgia rheumatic (inflammation of the joints and tissues around joints).

What are the symptoms of temporal arteritis?

- Eye symptoms: acute or temporary loss of vision, double vision, pain
- General symptoms: headache, scalp tenderness (on the sides), pain in the jaw with chewing, fever, sweats, muscle aches, shoulder and hip stiffness, weight loss.

What are the complications of temporal arteritis?

- Severe loss of vision in one or both eyes
- Stroke
- Heart attack.

How is temporal arteritis diagnosed?

- History and examination
- Blood tests looking for inflammation
- Temporal artery biopsy: a small section of the artery on the side of the head is removed under local anaesthesia to look for signs of inflammation.

What is the treatment of temporal arteritis?

Steroid treatment, by mouth or intravenously via a vein. Treatment may be started before a biopsy is done to decrease the risk of further vision loss. If you are given steroids see your general practitioner to manage the side effects.

Things to remember

Temporal arteritis can result in severe vision loss which may be prevented by urgent steroid treatment. If you have a change in your vision or any of the other symptoms above, contact your general practitioner immediately. Please contact your doctor if you have any concerns.

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