



## Points To Remember About Giant Cell Arteritis

- Giant cell arteritis causes the arteries of the scalp and neck to become red, hot, swollen, or painful. The arteries of the temples are most commonly affected.
- The disorder mainly affects people over 50, especially women.
- Giant cell arteritis is treated with medications, such as prednisone.
- Early treatment will help prevent serious problems such as permanent vision loss and stroke.
- If you have giant cell arteritis, your doctor should also look for signs of another disorder, polymyalgia rheumatica.

## What is giant cell arteritis?

Giant cell arteritis causes the arteries of the scalp and neck to become red, hot, swollen, or painful. The arteries most affected are those in the temples on either side of the head. These arteries narrow, so not enough blood can pass through.

It is important that you get treatment right away. Otherwise, the arteries could be permanently damaged. There is also a risk of blindness or stroke.

If you have giant cell arteritis, your doctor should also look for signs of another disorder, [polymyalgia rheumatica](#). These conditions often occur together.

## Who gets giant cell arteritis?

Giant cell arteritis mainly affects people over 50, especially women. Men with the disorder are more likely to develop blindness.

## What are the symptoms of giant cell arteritis?

Signs of giant cell arteritis can include:

- Flu-like symptoms early in the disease, such as feeling tired, loss of appetite, and fever.
- Headaches.

- Pain and tenderness over the temples.
- Double vision or vision loss.
- Dizziness.
- Problems with coordination and balance.
- Pain in the jaw and tongue, especially when eating.
- Difficulty in opening the mouth wide.
- Scalp sores (rare cases).

## Is there a test for giant cell arteritis?

To diagnose you with giant cell arteritis, your doctor will:

- Ask you about your medical history.
- Give you a physical exam to see if the arteries in your temples are swollen, tender to the touch, and have a reduced pulse.
- Take a small section of the artery in your temple to examine it under a microscope.

## How is giant cell arteritis treated?

Giant cell arteritis is treated with medications, such as prednisone. You will probably take high doses of the medicine for about one month. Your doctor will slowly reduce the dose, which may cause some symptoms to come back. After a while, symptoms usually go away completely, and the doctor can stop the prednisone altogether.

You should report any symptoms to your doctor so that you can be treated early. This can help prevent serious problems such as permanent vision loss and stroke.

## For more info

### **U.S. Food and Drug Administration**

Toll free: 888-INFO-FDA (888-463-6332)

Website: <https://www.fda.gov>

Drugs@FDA at <https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cder/daf>. Drugs@FDA is a searchable catalog of FDA-approved drug products.

### **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics**

Website: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs>

**National Eye Institute**

Website: <https://www.nei.nih.gov>

**National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute**

Website: <https://www.nhlbi.nih.gov>

**American College of Rheumatology**

Website: <https://www.rheumatology.org>

**American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association, Inc.**

Website: <https://www.aarda.org>

**Arthritis Foundation**

Website: <https://www.arthritis.org>

**National Organization for Rare Disorders**

Website: <https://www.rarediseases.org>

If you need more information about available resources in your language or other languages, please visit our webpages below or contact the NIAMS Information Clearinghouse at [NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov](mailto:NIAMSInfo@mail.nih.gov).

- [Asian Language Health Information](#)
- [Spanish Language Health Information](#)