British Heart Foundation

Spontaneous Coronary Artery Dissection (SCAD)

What is it?

Your heart muscle receives its own blood supply from the coronary arteries and their branches.

Like every other organ in your body, your heart needs oxygen-rich blood to survive.

Your coronary arteries are made up of three layers. Spontaneous coronary artery dissection (known as SCAD) happens when one or more of the inner layers of a coronary artery tears away from the outer layer.

Blood is able to flow into the space between the layers and a blood clot forms, reducing the flow of blood through the artery.

**FIGHT
FOR EVERY
HEARTBEAT**

bhf.org.uk

What causes it?

Unfortunately we do not yet know a great deal about SCAD, or why it happens. It often strikes out of the blue, but unlike coronary heart disease (CHD) which is the UK's single biggest killer, it doesn't appear to be preventable.

Further research is needed to help us better understand this rare condition, but we know that:

- SCAD usually strikes between the ages of 19 & 64
- Most people with SCAD will have few or no risk factors for heart and circulatory disease
- 80% of those with SCAD are women
- 30% are nearing the end of a pregnancy or have recently given birth.

What are the symptoms?

The symptoms are very similar to those of angina. You may feel a heaviness or tightness in your chest, which may spread to your arms, neck, jaw, back or stomach. You may also feel short of breath, sick, sweaty and light headed. If the artery becomes completely blocked you may have a heart attack – which puts you at risk of a cardiac arrest.

If you have chest pain or any of the symptoms above call 999 immediately.

What is the Women's Room?

Our Women's Room is a dedicated online hub for women living with heart disease.

It features real stories about real women living with heart conditions and includes practical information to help women adjust to life with a heart problem. It also includes a women-only online community where women can share experiences and find support from other women who understand exactly what they're going through.

Visit our Women's Room at **bhf.org.uk/women**

Heart Helpline

Our cardiac nurses and heart health advisors are here to answer your questions about anything heart related.

Call us on 0300 330 3311

Similar cost to 01 or 02 numbers.
Lines are open 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday.

This information does not replace the advice that your doctor or nurse may give you. If you are worried about your heart health in any way, contact your GP or local healthcare provider.

What about research?

We are relentlessly working to expand our knowledge of heart disease, who it affects and why. This is why we are funding the UK's first ever research project into SCAD.

The results of this ground breaking project will aim to make it easier to find people affected by the condition and help them to live their lives despite their diagnosis.

Dr David Adlam at the NIHR Leicester Cardiovascular Biomedical Research Unit, part of the University of Leicester, is leading the two-year pioneering research project. Dr Adlam is establishing the UK's first ever database of SCAD patients that his team can study for clues about what causes the condition and how best to treat it.

If you would like more information on the research programme, or would like to take part, visit **scad.lcbru.le.ac.uk**

Becks' story

Becks suffered a heart attack, aged just 34.

She woke up one morning with a crushing feeling in her chest; it felt like she was being pushed into the bed. She felt hot, sick and struggled to sit up and the pain soon started radiating into her jaw and down her arm.

Upon going to hospital and undergoing an emergency angiogram, it was confirmed that one of her coronary arteries had torn – a condition known as SCAD. Becks stayed in hospital for three weeks where she was put on medication to lower her blood pressure and heart rate but thankfully her condition is now stable.

Becks is now highly involved in raising awareness of the condition and it is as a result of her efforts to trace other UK sufferers that Dr Adlam's project is now underway.