

## Know Your Risk Factors

The following factors may increase your risk for heart disease and, ultimately, a heart attack. Check all the boxes that apply to you:

- You are male and over 45 years old.
- You are female and over 55 years old, **or** you have passed menopause or had your ovaries removed and are not taking estrogen.
- Your father or brother had a heart attack before age 55, **or** your mother or sister had one before the age of 65.
- You smoke **or** you live/work with someone who smokes daily.
- You have a cholesterol level of 240 mg/dL or higher.
- You've been told your blood pressure is high.
- You do **not** exercise on a regular basis for at least 30 minutes.
- You're 20 pounds or more overweight.
- You have diabetes **or** you need medicine to control your blood sugar.

If you checked two or more boxes, you may be at risk for heart disease, and a calcium scoring exam may be a good next step in assessing that risk more completely.

*If you have additional questions about calcium scoring contact your personal healthcare provider or call Iowa Heart Center at (515) 633-3700.*

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## Coronary Calcium Scoring



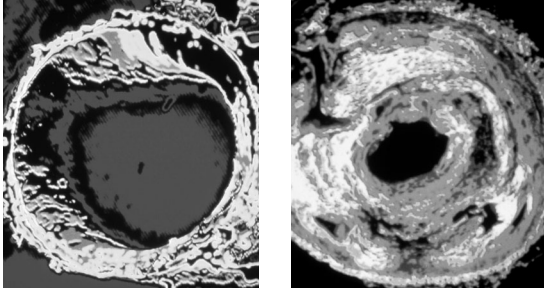
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## Coronary Artery Disease, Atherosclerosis and Heart Attacks

When most people think of “heart disease,” they’re really thinking of *coronary artery disease*, or CAD, the clogging of arteries that can lead to a heart attack.

CAD is the end result of a progressive hardening of the arteries, a process in which the arteries become clogged and prevent oxygen-rich blood from reaching the heart.

Over time, deposits of cholesterol and other substances build up along blood vessel walls, and become calcified. Blood flow through the vessel slows until a blood clot forms - completely sealing off the passage of blood to the heart. It is at this moment that a heart attack occurs.



CT images of a healthy artery (left), and clogged artery (right).

## Coronary Calcium Scoring: Detecting CAD in its Earliest Stages

Calcium scoring is one of the most advanced methods available to detect heart disease in its earliest stages. And, there’s no better time than now to prevent heart disease, because statistics<sup>1</sup> like these continue to remind us of its tragic effects:

- Every 29 seconds, an American suffers a heart attack
- Every minute an American dies from a heart attack
- 50% of men and 63% of women who die suddenly of heart disease have no previous symptoms
- About 80% of the people under 65 who died of heart disease did so during their first heart attack.

Calcification in the coronary arteries is the earliest indicator of heart disease. Calcium scoring uses noninvasive, high-speed computed tomography (CT) to scan your heart and detect calcium deposits along the walls of arteries. The test then produces a “score” that identifies the number and locations of any calcium deposits. Taking into account other factors such as age, family history and cholesterol level, your cardiologist uses the calcium score to measure your risk for heart disease.



## What to Expect During the Calcium Scoring Exam

Other than avoiding caffeine, there are no special preparations for the exam; no fasting, no injections, no ceasing of medications, and no need to change clothes. Women will need to remove bras, and jewelry may also need to be removed in some instances.

You’ll be lying comfortably on the exam table for about five minutes, though the scan takes only seconds.

Electrocardiogram (EKG) leads will be placed on your chest to synchronize the scan with your heartbeats.

You will be asked to hold your breath for a few seconds during scanning.

**NOTE: Your heart rate will need to be 90 beats per minute or less in order to receive the calcium scoring test. For this reason, caffeine is not recommended the day of the test.**

## Testing Results

The results of your exam represent peace of mind, since early detection is the key to prevention. Considering over half of the people who died suddenly of heart disease had no symptoms, what you know today can help you live a healthier tomorrow.

## Testing Results

The ideal calcium score is zero. A score of one or higher indicates *some* risk of heart disease, and your cardiologist or family physician can recommend lifestyle changes or drug therapies to help slow progression of the disease.