

GIANT CELL ARTERITIS



1. What is it?

Giant cell arteritis (GCA) is a chronic, inflammatory disease that affects the large and medium-sized arteries in the head, neck, and upper extremities. It is also known as temporal arteritis.



2. Clinical symptoms

- Headache (90%)
- Scalp tenderness (50-70%)
- Jaw pain/ claudication (40-60%)
- Vision changes (5-15% of cases)
- Fatigue, fever, weight loss

3. Diagnosis

- Primary care: blood tests (ESR, CRP)
- Temporal artery biopsy (90% accuracy)
- Imaging studies (ultrasound, CT, MRI)



4. Risk factors

- Age over 50 (90%)
- Having a family history of GCA
- Being of Northern European descent
- Presence of other inflammatory diseases such as polymyalgia rheumatica

5. Management

- GCA is a medical emergency. Suspected GCA should be immediately treated with glucocorticoids.
- If there is new visual loss or double vision arrange same day assessment by an ophthalmologist.
- Urgently discuss with a specialist and refer using a fast track local GCA pathway.

