

# Your Journey with Giant Cell Arteritis



For more information scan this QR code or go to [myhealth.alberta.ca/gca-pathway](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/gca-pathway)

**Giant cell arteritis (GCA) is an inflammatory condition that affects your blood vessels. GCA (also known as temporal arteritis) causes a narrowing of the arteries that carry blood to your head, neck, and chest. This means that people who have GCA need to be treated right away to avoid serious issues such as vision loss or stroke.** You are the most important part of your healthcare team. This guide will help you to know what to expect as you work with your team to manage and treat GCA. If you have any questions along the way, please ask your healthcare team.

## Before your appointment

- Write down how you feel, your symptoms, and any questions or concerns.
- Consider bringing a family member or friend to support you.



## Visit your healthcare provider

- Share all of your symptoms and concerns. Your health includes physical, emotional, spiritual, financial, and social elements.
- In order to better manage your health condition, your healthcare provider needs to hear from you and understand who you are and what matters to you.



## Get your tests

- Your healthcare provider will need bloodwork to check if there is inflammation in your body.
- If your healthcare provider is concerned that you might have GCA, you may also go for an ultrasound or a biopsy.



## Review your test results

- Find your test results on MyHealth Records or MyChart ([myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/myhealthrecords) or [ahs.ca/mychart](https://ahs.ca/mychart)) or ask your healthcare provider to print them for you.
- Talk with your healthcare provider so you know what your test results mean.



## Review your treatment & management options

- Your healthcare provider will help you better understand your condition and give you important strategies to guide your recovery.
- Medication will be used to treat GCA and steroids may be started by your healthcare provider after reviewing your test results. It will be important to start medication early.
- Discuss with your healthcare provider what to expect from the treatment, how any side effects may impact you, and how to manage them.



## Start your treatment & watch your symptoms

- Take an active role in your treatment.
- Watch for changes in your health and contact your provider about any new symptoms.



## Talk with your healthcare provider about a referral

- If your healthcare provider thinks there is a risk of GCA, you will be referred to a rheumatologist.
- Ask who you are being sent to and what they do.
- You should hear from a rheumatologist within a few days from being referred.



## Keep taking care of yourself

- Keep taking care of your overall health.
- Look for other healthy lifestyle resources and supports.



Whole-person health

### Important Tips:

**Need to connect with a primary care clinic?**

[ahs.ca/findadoctor](https://ahs.ca/findadoctor)

**Need a translator or interpreter?** Let your healthcare provider know

**Need health advice?**

Call Health Link at 811

**Need to find programs and resources in your community?**

Call 211 or visit [ab.211.ca](https://ab.211.ca)



Primary Care  
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