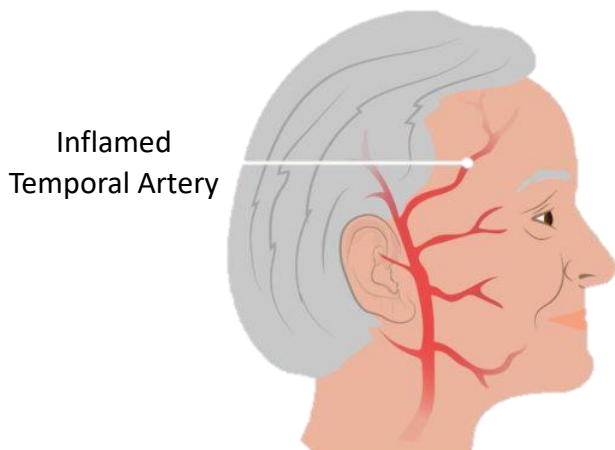


## What is Giant Cell Arteritis or Temporal Arteritis?

Giant cell arteritis (GCA), also known as temporal arteritis, is a disorder where the blood vessels in your head, and sometimes other parts of the body, become inflamed (i.e. swollen). The inflammation and swelling can narrow or completely block the affected blood vessel. This in turn reduces blood flow.



- Caused by inflammation in blood vessels called arteries
- More common in people older than 50
- More common in women than men
- If not treated, can cause blindness, stroke or even death.

Source: modified from <https://creakyjoints.org/>

### How do I know that I have GCA or temporal arteritis?

The symptoms of temporal arteritis can be very similar to many different diseases. Your doctor will try to sort it out by doing an eye exam and getting some blood work.

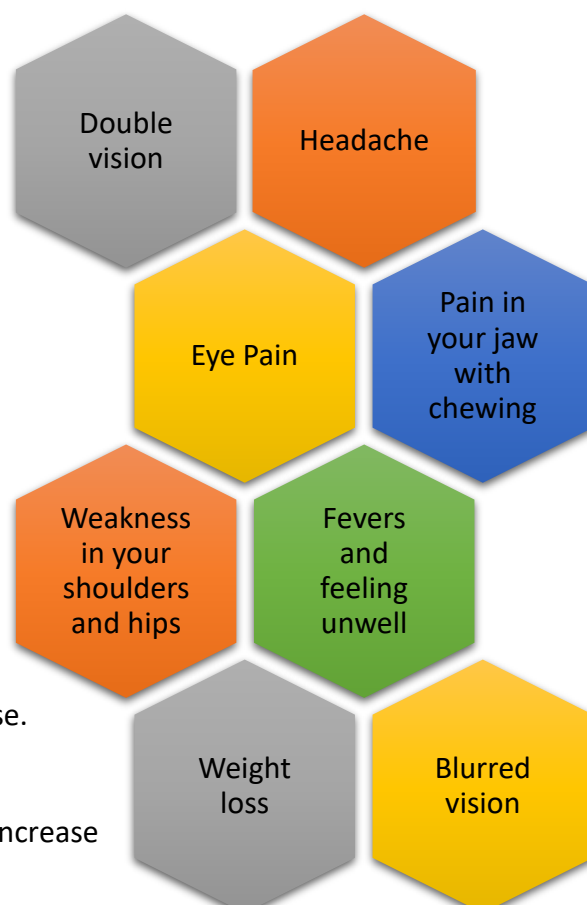
The only way to know for sure is to do a biopsy of the temporal artery.

### What causes temporal arteritis?

The exact cause of GCA is unknown. However, there are some factors that may raise the risk of developing the disease.

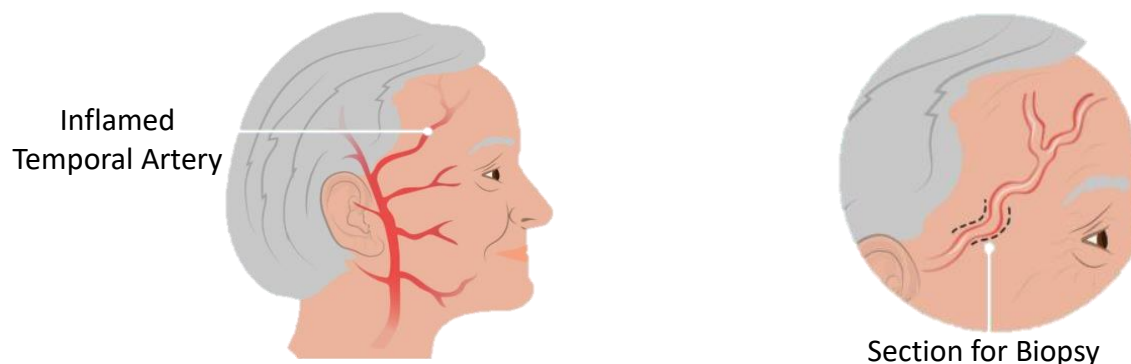
Some of these include sex, race, or age.

Having a condition called polymyalgia rheumatica may also increase the risk of developing temporal arteritis.



**Symptoms of Temporal Arteritis**

## What is a Temporal Artery Biopsy, and how does it diagnose Giant Cell Arteritis?



Source: Modified from <https://creakyjoints.org>

A biopsy of the artery in your temple is done to see if you have temporal arteritis or not. Your surgeon will find a good blood vessel to test and then inject some freezing around it. The skin is opened, a small piece of artery is removed and sent to a pathology lab. The skin is then closed with stitches or staples. The biopsy is only a small piece of the artery, and your other blood vessels can easily take over for the missing piece. You can go home after the procedure.

### How is the biopsy used to diagnose temporal arteritis?

To confirm the diagnosis, a pathologist will examine the piece of the artery that was removed using a microscope. In people with GCA, the lining of the vessels will look swollen and may also show unusually large cells called multi-nucleated giant cells. If the results are uncertain there is a chance you will require a second biopsy on the other side of your head.

### What are the risks of a temporal artery biopsy?

As with any surgery, there is a risk of infection or bleeding. There will be a scar when the skin was opened. There is a nerve that runs through your temple that moves your eyebrow. It is possible, but very unlikely that this nerve could be damaged causing a droopy eyebrow.

### How do we treat temporal arteritis?

The most common treatment for temporal arteritis is a steroid drug called prednisone. It works well but it has a lot of side effects, and the treatment usually lasts for a year or more. Another medication called tocilizumab can be used if the prednisone doesn't work well enough or can't be stopped safely. Stopping treatment early can cause the disease to come back, so it is important to stay on your medication until the disease is fully treated.