

Understanding Your CAC Score

CORCAL RESEARCH STUDY

What is a CAC Score?

A **coronary artery calcium (CAC) score** is obtained from a CT scan of your heart. It measures how much calcium is present in the large blood vessels, known as coronary arteries, that feed your heart.

What does my CAC score mean?

Your CAC score is a number. Higher numbers mean that there is more calcium buildup in your blood vessels. This gives you a higher risk of having a heart attack or stroke.

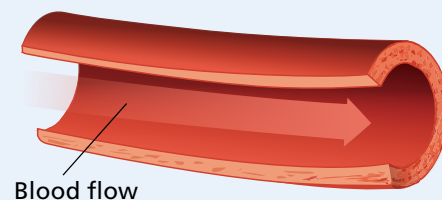
When calcium and other plaque [plak] build up in the walls of a blood vessel, the opening that blood travels through gets smaller. This makes it easier for blood vessels to become blocked. When a blockage happens in a blood vessel that feeds the heart, it's called a **heart attack**. If it happens in a blood vessel that feeds the brain, it's called a **stroke**.

On the right, you will find examples of what a coronary artery may look like. The white areas show calcium, and the yellow areas show other types of plaque, made up of cholesterol and fats. Calcium buildup is easy to measure in a CT scan, while other plaque is harder to find.

Should I take a statin drug?

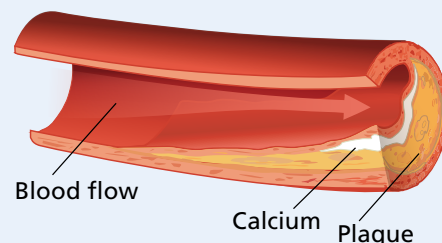
If you have a high CAC score, your doctor may recommend taking a statin medication. For more information, see the **Statins** fact sheet in [English](#) or [Spanish](#).

Side view of blood vessel

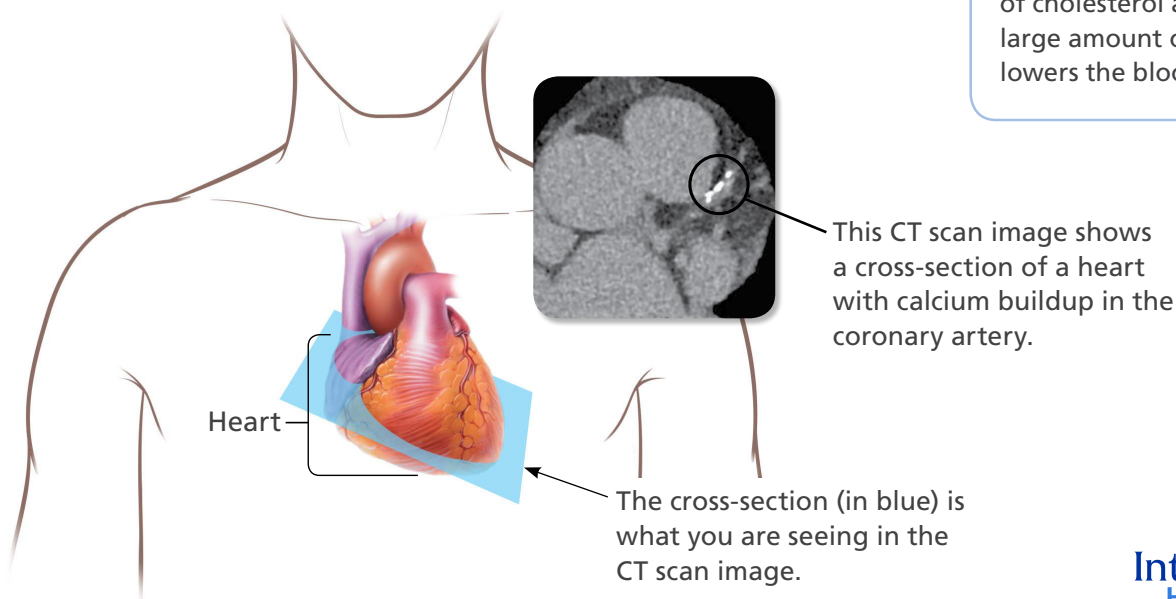


CAC score is low: A normal coronary artery (a blood vessel which supplies blood to the heart) has steady blood flow and is free from calcium and other plaque (cholesterol and fats).

Side view of blood vessel



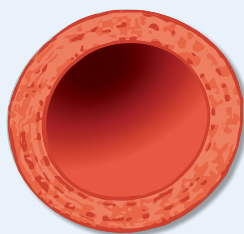
CAC score is high: A coronary artery with a large amount of calcium (white) and other plaque made of cholesterol and fats (yellow). A large amount of calcium and plaque lowers the blood flow in the artery.



Understanding Your CAC Score *Continued*

CORCAL RESEARCH STUDY

Blood vessel:
Blood flows down the center of the ring

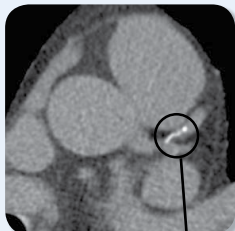
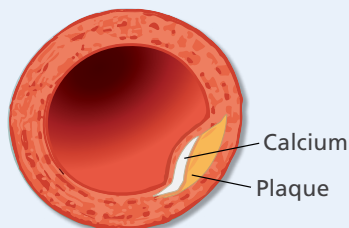


CT scan image:
A cross-section of the heart



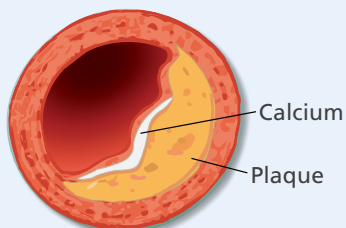
CAC score = 0 (Zero)

No plaque can be seen. Your risk of having an event, such as a heart attack or stroke, is very low. The CorCal study does not recommend treatment with medication unless your LDL ("bad" cholesterol) is very high in your blood (greater than or equal to 190).



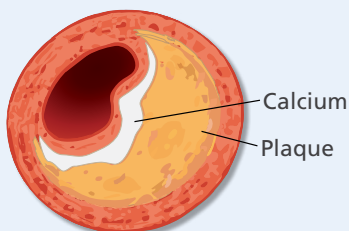
CAC score = 1 to 100

A small amount of plaque is present in the arteries of your heart. This means you have a **slightly increased risk** of having an event such as a heart attack or stroke. This is a borderline CAC score. Some people need treatment at this stage and others do not. It will depend on your other risk factors, such as your gender or age.



CAC score = 101 to 400

A large amount of plaque is present in the arteries of your heart. This means you have a **moderately increased risk** of having an event such as a heart attack or stroke. The CorCal study recommends that you take a high-intensity statin to lower your risk.



CAC score = 400+

A very high amount of plaque is present in the arteries of your heart. This means you have a **high risk** of having an event such as a heart attack or stroke. The CorCal study recommends that you take a high-intensity statin.

White = Calcium deposits
Yellow = Other plaque