

Fibromuscular Dysplasia (FMD)

General Information

Fibromuscular dysplasia (known as FMD) is a disease that causes the muscles and fibers within the wall of an artery to develop in an abnormal way. This can cause the artery walls to narrow in an irregular way (beading), narrow (stenosis), tear (dissection) or bulge (aneurysm).

FMD can affect any artery but it mostly affects the arteries that go to the kidneys (renal artery) and brain (carotid artery).

Causes

The exact cause of FMD is not known. You may be born with an abnormal artery. It may also be related to smoking or hormones.

Who Can Get It

Anyone can get FMD at any age. Middle-aged women get it more often than others.

Symptoms

Symptoms are based on the artery and organs affected. Common symptoms are:

- high blood pressure in people younger than age 40
- high blood pressure not under control at any age
- headache, neck pain, dizziness or uneven pupils
- a whooshing sound that happens when the heart beats
- an abnormal sound (bruit) the health care provider finds when listening with a stethoscope
- stroke or transient ischemic attack (“mini stroke”)
- no symptoms.

How Your Health Care Provider Will Confirm You Have it

Your health care provider will give you an exam.

Your provider may suggest you have imaging tests to show your artery. These tests include ultrasound, CT (computerized tomography), MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) or an angiogram.

How To Treat It

Treatment depends on which artery and organs are affected, what’s wrong with the arteries and what symptoms you have.

You may need follow-up exams and tests, especially if you did not have symptoms.

Your treatment options include:

- medicines to:
 - control high blood pressure
 - control headaches
 - help reduce your risk of stroke (low-dose aspirin each day)
 - help prevent new or returning blood clots (anticoagulants)
- catheter-based procedures or open surgeries to:
 - open an artery that is narrowed or blocked
 - repair an artery that burst.

Together, you and your health care provider will decide on treatment that's right for you.

Living With FMD

There is no cure for FMD. Getting treatment early can help you prevent complications (problems). You may need to make some lifestyle changes but you should be able to do most of your regular activities.

In rare cases, aneurysms can burst and cause bleeding that can cause a major stroke or death.

Keep all follow-up appointments with all of your health care providers.