

# LUNG SCREENING RESULTS LETTER EXPLAINED

You may have received a letter saying that your recent lung screening scan showed something called coronary artery calcification. That can sound worrying, but we're here to explain what it means—and what you can do about it.

## What is calcification of the arteries?

Coronary artery calcification is a build-up of calcium in the walls of the blood vessels that supply your heart. This build up is part of a process called atherosclerosis, where fatty material and cholesterol build up in the arteries. Over time this can harden and become calcified. The presence of these calcified plaques can reduce blood flow and increase stiffness of the artery walls.

The important thing to know is:

- This is common, especially as we get older
- It often causes no symptoms at all
- But it can be an early sign of heart disease

## Why is this important?

This calcification may not be causing symptoms now, but it tells us that your arteries may be becoming narrower or less flexible.

This can increase your risk of:

- Heart attacks
- Angina (chest pains)
- Other heart problems in the future

But the good news is that finding it early gives us a chance to reduce your risk.

### Please note:

If you are currently experiencing any symptoms such as chest pains, shortness of breath or palpitations it's important that you book a review with a doctor as soon as possible.



## Why does this happen?

Coronary artery calcification develops gradually over many years.

Factors that increase the risk include:

- Getting older
- Smoking
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Diabetes
- Being overweight
- Family history of heart disease

Often, it's a combination of these factors rather than a single cause.

## What can you do?

---

There is a lot you can do to protect your heart including:

- Stopping smoking – if you smoke this is one of the most important steps you can take. We have local stop smoking services available who can support you with this
- Eat a healthy diet – try to reduce the amount of saturated fat, salt and sugar in the diet. Instead aim for more fruits, vegetables, whole grains and healthy fats
- Stay active – try to increase your activity levels as much as possible
- Reduce alcohol intake – if you drink more than 14 units a week try to cut this down
- Manage other conditions – make sure other conditions increasing your risk such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol or diabetes are well managed

## Why are statins recommended?

---

The letter recommends that statins be started to help reduce risk of future heart events. Statins work by lowering the level of cholesterol in your blood, particularly “bad” cholesterol.

This helps to:

- Slow down the build-up of plaque in your arteries
- Stabilise existing plaques, making them less likely to cause problems
- Reduce your risk of heart attack and stroke

Statins are generally well-tolerated by most people. Sometimes they can be associated with muscle pains, although this is uncommon. If you develop muscle pains when taking a statin we advise to contact the surgery for a review.

We usually start atorvastatin 20mg once daily to help reduce the risk of future heart attacks and strokes. We will typically do a blood test 3 months after starting the medication to recheck on cholesterol levels and make sure that your LDL (‘bad cholesterol’) levels have come down.

## Conclusion

---

Finding coronary artery calcification can be worrying but the good news is that this has been detected early and by making lifestyle changes and possibly starting statins we can help to prevent future events.

We hope this information has been of use. We have included some further resources below to provide additional information.

If you would like to start a statin or discuss this further, please reply to the message you have received, and we can arrange a prescription or a discussion with a clinical pharmacist.

## Additional resources:

[What is calcification of the arteries, and how is it treated? - BHF](#)

[Healthy Living | Keeping Your Heart Healthy - BHF](#)

[Healthy Eating Diet Plans | HEART UK - The Cholesterol Charity](#)

[Stop Smoking - Fitter Futures Warwickshire](#)

[What are statins, how do they work and their side effects? - BHF](#)

[Statins and Cholesterol Medicine - HEART UK](#)