

AORTITIS

WHAT IS AORTITIS?

Aortitis refers to inflammation of the aorta, which carries oxygenated blood from the heart to the rest of the body. It is representative of a cluster of large-vessel diseases that have various or unknown causes

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of aortitis can vary depending on the location and cause of the inflammation. However, general symptoms may include:

- Back pain
- Abdominal pain
- The aortic valve not closing properly, allowing a back flow of blood (aortic insufficiency)
- Thoracic aortic aneurysm

Patients may also experience other symptoms such as, fever, along with headaches, weakness, weight loss, joint pain, chest pain, shortness of breath, fainting and visual disturbances,

CAUSE

The most common causes of aortitis are the large vessel vasculitides, giant cell arteritis (GCA) and Takayasu arteritis, although it is also associated with several other rheumatologic diseases and infection such as salmonella and Staphylococcus spp.

TREATMENT

Treatment of aortitis will depend on the cause of the condition. When an underlying inflammatory disease such as GCA or Takayasu's arteritis causes the condition, treatment will usually focus on relieving symptoms and preventing tissue damage. A corticosteroid such as prednisone is usually given to reduce inflammation, and treatment can take two years or longer. Surgery may also be needed but is often performed at a later time if the condition causes damage. For infectious aortitis, swift treatment of the underlying infection is very important. Treatment for this type of aortitis will usually begin with broad-spectrum antibiotics given intravenously. Patients may also need surgical treatment to repair any aneurysms that have developed and to remove any damaged or dead tissue.