

Breast arterial calcification could be warning sign of heart disease, study suggests

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Heart disease risk assessment tools specific to women remain lacking, despite the fact that cardiovascular disease is the leading cause of mortality in women. A new study suggests that mammograms may pinpoint a key risk factor, demonstrating an association between breast arterial calcifications and cardiovascular disease.

Results of the study are presented at the 2024 [Annual Meeting of The Menopause Society](#), held in Chicago from September 10–14.

It is estimated that [heart disease](#) is responsible for one in every three female deaths each year in the U.S. Yet, information about how to spot warning signs in women is still unreliable. What has been suggested, however, is that not only does heart disease manifest differently in women than men, but it can also be different from woman to woman depending on their backgrounds.

The results of a new study, though, suggest there could be a common risk factor found through a very routine medical tool—a mammogram. The study, which followed nearly 400 women for 18 years, demonstrates a potential association between [breast](#) arterial calcifications (which show up as white parallel lines on a mammogram and are typically benign) observed on mammography and cardiovascular disease.

More specifically, women with breast arterial calcifications were more likely to experience atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (a type of heart disease that occurs when plaque builds up in the walls of the arteries to limit [blood flow](#) to the organs)—23% in those with breast arterial calcifications compared to 13.9% in those without.

"Prior research has already suggested this type of association," says Hannah Daley, lead author from Drexel University College of Medicine in West Reading, Pennsylvania.

"But this study aimed to assess the longitudinal association between breast arterial calcifications and atherosclerotic heart disease. Based on what we found, we believe the presence of breast arterial calcifications on a mammogram should be routinely reported."

"Studies like this one are encouraging because they provide information

on a tool that health care professionals could use to determine the risk of heart disease in women," says Dr. Stephanie Faubion, medical director for The Menopause Society.

"In addition, it reinforces that the [risk factors](#) for [cardiovascular disease](#) in [women](#) are different than for men."

More information: Presentation: "The association between breast arterial calcifications observed on mammography and cardiovascular disease: preliminary results from an 18-year prospective study."

Provided by The North American Menopause Society

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