

# Aortic Dissection

## What is it?

A tear in the inner layer of the aorta, the large blood vessel branching off the heart. Blood rushes through this tear into the middle layer of the aorta, causing the inner and middle layers to separate (dissect).

## Symptoms:

- Sudden severe chest or upper back pain, often described as a tearing, ripping or shearing sensation, that radiates to the neck or down the back
- Loss of consciousness (fainting)
- Shortness of breath
- Sudden difficulty speaking, loss of vision, weakness or paralysis of one side of your body, such as having a stroke
- Heavy sweating
- Weak pulse in one arm compared with the other

If you are having any of these signs or symptoms, they could be caused by an aortic dissection or another serious condition. Seek emergency medical help immediately.

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