

DEFINITION

1. **Temporal arteritis** is a condition which affects mainly the arteries of the head, although it may be more widespread, and in which there is inflammation of the whole thickness and whole circumference of the affected artery. There may be multiple focal lesions or a single lesion affecting a continuous length of the vessel.

CLINICAL MANIFESTATIONS

2. There may be reddening of the skin over the affected vessel, which itself may be painful and nodular.
3. Headache and visual disturbance. There may be facial pain.

AETIOLOGY

4. The condition occurs mostly in old people of both sexes.
5. The aetiology of the condition is unknown.
6. An immune destruction of the internal elastic lamina has been proposed and this proposition is supported by findings of circulatory immune complexes, together with immunoglobulins, complement deposition and a mononuclear infiltrate adjacent to the lamina.
7. Familial aggregation suggests the possibility of genetic factors but no consistent pattern of tissue typing has emerged.
8. Environmental factors have not been shown to play a part in the aetiology.
9. There is a recognised association with polymyalgia rheumatica and in both conditions the most consistent abnormality is a raised ESR.

CONCLUSION

10. **Temporal Arteritis** is a condition which affects arteries. Although of unknown aetiology, environmental factors have not been shown to play a part in the aetiology. Possible aetiological factors of a constitutional and genetic nature are discussed above.

REFERENCES

Hunder G. Polymyalgia Rheumatica and Giant Cell Arteritis. In: (Eds) Wyngaarden J B, Smith L H and Bennett J C. Cecil Textbook of Medicine. Philadelphia. W B Saunders Company. 19th Ed. 1992. p1544-1546.

Cull R E and Will R G. Diseases of the nervous system – Giant Cell Arteritis. In: (Eds) Edwards Christopher R W and Bouchier Ian A D. Davidson's Principles and Practice of Medicine. 16th Ed. 1991. Edinburgh. Churchill Livingstone. p867.