

# Calcium in Arteries Accurate Predictor of Heart Disease Risk

*LabFinder Cardiologist Dr. Robert Segal Offers Tips; Says Test Also Prevents Overtreatment*

NEW YORK, NY, UNITED STATES, July 6, 2023 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Let's get to the heart of it. A [coronary artery calcium](#) (CAC) score is a reliable screening tool and accurate predictor of risk for developing coronary artery disease or experiencing a heart attack. The test is especially beneficial for patients who otherwise have no symptoms but could be susceptible due to advanced age, gender, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, family history, diabetes, and other factors, according to cardiologist [Robert Segal MD](#), co-founder and CEO of [LabFinder](#), an online scheduling platform for all patient laboratory and radiology appointments.

"By performing a CT (computed tomography) scan or intravascular imaging, medical laboratory professionals assess the amount of plaque in a patient's coronary arteries and determine whether an asymptomatic patient is in danger of progressing to more serious plaque buildup and arterial blockage," Dr. Segal says. "The calcium score can help a physician determine whether a patient should be placed on preventive medications, including statins or low-dose aspirin. Test results also may encourage patients who have stopped taking statins because of side effects to resume their therapy."

Scientists, writing in a 2021 study published in Radiology: Cardiothoracic Imaging ([bit.ly/3CoxcKk](https://bit.ly/3CoxcKk)), call measurement of calcium in the heart arteries as "the most robust risk prediction tool for coronary artery disease events compared with other biomarkers, such as the serum marker high-sensitivity C-reactive protein and...testing for carotid-intima media thickness." These same experts contend approximately 50 percent of all deaths related to cardiovascular disease occur in individuals who have had no prior cardiac symptoms or diagnosis of heart problems. "Quantitative plaque burden [as determined by the CAC score] appears to be the best predictor of risk in the asymptomatic primary prevention populations," they state.



Dr. Robert Segal, Cardiologist and Co-Founder of LabFinder



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Just as importantly, the CAC number, called the Agatston score, has proven valuable in predicting conditions unrelated to cardiovascular disease, including cancer and all-cause mortality, as well as helping prevent overtreatment. “Older individuals and those considered to have factors putting them at a 10-year risk of developing cardiovascular disease may not require preventive therapy at all if their CAC scores indicate low levels of arterial plaque accumulations,” Dr. Segal states.

The Agatston score is a globally recognized number.

Even in patients with symptoms, such as chest pain or troubled breathing, results of CAC evaluation can either suggest appropriate therapeutic follow-up or exclude the presence of cardiovascular disease, says Dr. Segal, referring to a 2021 paper in the journal *Coronary Artery Disease* ([bit.ly/461tS5e](https://bit.ly/461tS5e)). In it, authors report CAC testing has “gained attention as an inexpensive, rapid, reproducible and a well-tolerated alternative to exclude CAD (coronary artery disease) in symptomatic patients and defer further invasive imaging tests.”

Dr. Segal developed LabFinder as a way of directing patients to the highest quality, most cost-effective testing laboratories and ensuring quick release of accurate testing results. The system serves as an online scheduling platform for all patient laboratory and radiology appointments. It electronically connects patients and doctors with local, quality lab and radiology centers for a seamless medical experience; offers timely test scheduling; and provides one central repository for users’ testing results.

Of course, the most preferable CAC score is zero, indicating a patient has no detectable plaque in the arteries and, therefore, is at low risk of cardiovascular disease or heart attack. Scores of up to 100 suggest low-to-medium risk and, between 100 and 300, a higher risk. Anything over 300 likely requires prompt preventive treatment, although some patients who have denser but more stable arterial plaque less likely to rupture than those with lower scores may register 1000 or above on the CAC scale, Dr. Segal explains.

Scores beyond 1000 also may signify calcification outside the coronary arteries, putting a patient at risk for developing cancer or other serious conditions. Authors of a 2022 article in *American Family Physician* ([bit.ly/3X61jzx](https://bit.ly/3X61jzx)) write, “in a 6.8-year study, patients with a CAC score of 101 to 400 or a score greater than 400 had a 5.6- or 9.7-fold greater risk of all-cause mortality, respectively, compared with a score of 0. In a 15-year study, the survival rate was 95.1% in patients with a score of 0 versus 83.7% in those with a score greater than 0.”

A common disorder, cardiovascular disease develops as the major arteries supplying the heart muscle with oxygen-rich blood and nutrients become clogged by plaque, which builds up along

the arteries' internal lining. Early symptoms of the disease, including fatigue, angina (chest pain), and shortness of breath, often go unnoticed. The condition may lead to heart attack, heart failure, or heart arrhythmias.

Dr. Segal recommends CAC testing for individuals, particularly men, who are of middle age or older, have high blood pressure or high cholesterol levels, are overweight, suffer from, diabetes, smoke, take certain medications, have a family history of heart disease, or follow a sedentary lifestyle. A doctor may also suggest periodic retesting depending on a patient's initial CAC number, Dr. Segal says.

"A higher CAC score does not mean a heart attack is imminent, but it does indicate a person needs to improve their lifestyle and habits," Dr. Segal states. He offers these tips to lower risk for developing serious cardiovascular disease:

- Exercise. Low-impact, aerobic workouts like walking, bicycling, and swimming are ideal.
- Achieve a weight appropriate to height. Lose abnormal and excessive fat accumulation. Obesity not only makes one more susceptible to heart disease but impairs health generally.
- Stop smoking and significantly reduce alcohol consumption.
- Adhere to a healthy diet, such as the Mediterranean food plan.
- As much as possible, work to reduce stress in your life.

Bio: Robert Segal MD, board-certified in cardiovascular disease, echocardiography, and nuclear cardiology. He is founder of Manhattan Cardiology and Medical Offices of Manhattan, and Co-Founder of LabFinder. <https://www.labfinder.com/>

About: LabFinder is a consumer-facing platform that transforms the patient experience through seamless lab & radiology testing, guiding patients to conveniently located testing centers, handling appointment bookings, offering telehealth services, and allowing patients to review their test results all in one place. LabFinder supports patients through their care journey from booking to billing—reducing expenses, hurdles, and frustrations. [www.labfinder.com](http://www.labfinder.com).

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