

Angina

Angina is chest pain caused by lack of oxygen to the heart muscle. Angina is a danger signal that may mean heart disease, or possibly a heart attack. Though you can have angina without having a heart attack, it is a warning signal for you to seek care immediately.

CAUSES

The coronary arteries supply blood and oxygen to the heart muscle. The arteries can become blocked by plaques, which are hardened deposits of fat and cholesterol. High cholesterol, high blood pressure, smoking, obesity, and diabetes contribute to the formation of plaques and ultimately angina.

SYMPTOMS

The most common *symptom* (problem) is pain deep in the center of the chest (sternal area). The pain may also be felt in, or move to, your arms (especially the left one), throat, jaw, back, or upper stomach. Angina is often brought on by exercise, emotional upset, heavy meals, or extremes of heat or cold. It typically resolves within 5-10 minutes of stopping the activity that caused it.

DIAGNOSIS

If you have angina, your caregiver will work to determine whether or not there are blockages in your coronary arteries. Emergency room evaluation or hospital admission may be needed. Blood tests, EKG's, and chest x-rays may be done. Further testing may include a stress test or an angiogram. A cardiologist may be asked to assist with your evaluation.

Your evaluation may show that heart disease is not present. Other causes for angina include muscle or joint strain in the chest wall, blood clots in the lung, acid reflux in the esophagus, or anxiety.

PREVENTION

Angina can be prevented by treating, or avoiding, its main risk factors: smoking, obesity, high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes.

RISKS AND COMPLICATIONS

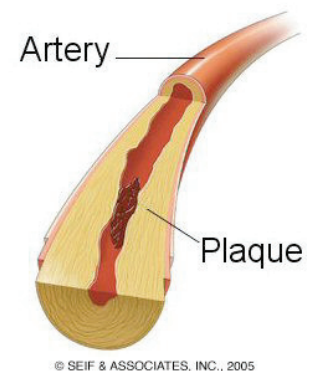
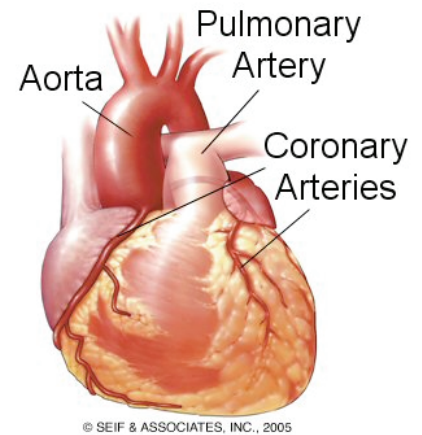
Angina that is not treated or evaluated can lead to a heart attack or even death.

TREATMENT

Angina that is caused by blockages of the coronary arteries can be treated in a number of ways, depending on severity of the blockages and on other factors. Lifestyle changes (weight loss, stopping smoking, appropriate exercise, low cholesterol and low salt diets) can help. Medications may be used to control angina, or to treat the risk factors of angina. Percutaneous Cardiac Intervention (PCI) techniques can allow a cardiologist to open up blockages without surgery. Open Heart Surgery may be needed to bypass blocked arteries that cannot be treated in any other way.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If your caregiver prescribed medication to control your angina, take as directed. Report side effects. Don't stop medications or adjust the dosages on your own.
- Regular exercise is good for you as long as it doesn't cause pain. Avoid activities that trigger attacks of



angina. Walking is the best exercise. Don't begin any new type of exercise until you check with your caregiver.

- You may still have a sexual relationship if it does not cause angina. Inform your caregiver if it does.
- Stop smoking. Your caregiver will help you.
- If you are overweight, you should lose weight. Eat a heart-healthy diet that is low in fat and salt.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Your angina seems to be occurring more often or seems to be lasting longer.
- You are having problems that you think may be side effects of the medicine you are taking. Read your medication instructions carefully.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You have severe chest pain, especially if the pain is crushing or pressure-like and spreads to the arms, back, neck, or jaw.
- You have sweating, *nausea* (feeling sick to your stomach), or shortness of breath.
- Your chest pain gets worse and does not lessen with rest as your angina usually does.
- You have an attack of chest pain lasting longer than usual despite rest and treatment with the medications your caregiver has prescribed.
- You wake from sleep with chest pain.
- You feel dizzy or faint.
- You have chest pain not typical of your usual angina. **THIS IS AN EMERGENCY. Don't wait to see if the pain will go away. Get medical help at once. Call 911 or 0 (operator). DO NOT drive yourself to the hospital.**