Living With Chronic Angina Resource Guide

CardioSmart
American College of Cardiology
This program was sponsored by Gilead Sciences, Inc.
• About Chronic Angina
• Your Health Care Team & Doctor Visits
• Treatment Options for Chronic Angina
• Living with Chronic Angina
• Resources for Support
• Common symptom of coronary heart disease

• Pain or discomfort in your chest, usually during exercise or emotional stress
  – Your heart’s way of telling you it’s not getting enough oxygen
  – When the heart needs to work harder (with exercise, lifting heavy objects, etc.), but doesn’t get enough oxygen → chest pain and discomfort can occur
Unlike other types of angina, chronic angina is usually:

- Short-lived (often ≤5 minutes)
- Predictable (most often occurs when the heart is forced to work harder)
- Relieved with rest or by taking medication (nitroglycerin)
### How Does It Compare to Other Types of Angina?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>PATTERN</th>
<th>TRIGGERS</th>
<th>DURATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chronic/stable</td>
<td>Predictable at certain level of exertion or stress</td>
<td>Emotional or extreme physical stress</td>
<td>Short-lived; relieved at rest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unstable</td>
<td>Unexpected or a change in stable symptoms</td>
<td>Happens at rest; accelerating during sleep</td>
<td>Can last longer than 30 minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Less common, resulting from spasms or dysfunction in coronary artery or walls of blood vessels:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Pattern</th>
<th>Triggers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Variant</td>
<td>Sudden, without warning</td>
<td>No clear triggers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microvascular</td>
<td>Hard to predict</td>
<td>No clear triggers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
If you have chronic angina, you are not alone.

- 13 million Americans have coronary artery disease
- Nearly 9 million have chest pain
  - Stable angina is most common type of angina
What It Feels Like

Varies from person-to-person

- Chest pain or pressure
  - Some say they feel burning, tightness or heaviness in chest or upper body
  - May also be felt in the arm, shoulder, back, jaw or neck
- Shortness of breath
- Feeling overly tired
- Feeling faint
- Nausea
- Sweating
- General weakness

*Women tend to experience more symptoms, more likely to have nausea or back or jaw pain*
Common Triggers

Things that make the heart work harder than usual:

• Exercise
• Lifting heavy items
• Emotional stress
• Exposure to extremely cold temperatures
• Eating large meals
• Smoking
Common Causes

Conditions that slow blood flow to the heart:

• Narrowing or stiffening of the arteries that supply blood to the heart (atherosclerosis) due to plaque
• Blood clots in the arteries
• Heart failure
• Other medical conditions such as:
  – Anemia (lower number of healthy red blood cells)
  – Aortic stenosis (when the heart's aortic valve narrows)
  – Hyperthyroidism (overactive thyroid)
Risk Factors

- Being overweight
- Lack of physical activity/sedentary lifestyle
- Diet
- Coronary artery disease
- High cholesterol
- High blood pressure
- Diabetes
- Smoking
- Stress

Note: These are the same factors that increase the risk of coronary artery disease in general.
How Chronic Angina is Diagnosed

• Detailed medical history and questions about your symptoms
• Blood tests to check blood cholesterol, blood sugar and other heart disease indicators
• Angiography/X-ray to see how blood flows to your heart
• Electrocardiogram to measure the heart’s rhythm and electrical activity
• Stress test to see how your heart responds when it beats rapidly
• Possible referral to an interventional cardiologist for cardiac catheterization
Why Treat Chronic Angina?

- To ease symptoms
- Help you be more active
- Prevent problems such as:
  - Heart attack
  - Abnormal heart rhythm disorder
  - Unstable angina
Treatment for Chronic Angina
Treatment for Chronic Angina

Your treatment will depend on:
• Your risk of heart disease or the extent of disease
• Other risk factors (for example, age, other medical conditions)
• Your personal preferences

Goals:
• Ease or stop any pain or discomfort
• Help get you maintain and/or back to normal activities
Treatment Options

• Lifestyle changes
• Cardiac rehabilitation
• Medications
  – Antianginals to prevent or lessen pain or discomfort
  – Antithrombotics to prevent blood from clotting
• Medical procedures
Lifestyle Changes

• Eat better
  – Choose foods that are low in cholesterol, saturated and trans fats and salt
  – Don’t overindulge or eat large meals

• Relax and reduce stress
  – Avoid overly stressful situations when possible
  – Meditation, yoga, deep breathing, getting enough sleep and engaging in activities you enjoy may help reduce anxiety

• Stop smoking and avoid exposure to smoke

• Move more
  – Find a safe and reasonable level of physical activity
  – Don’t overexert yourself

• Maintain a healthy weight
  – Excess body weight makes your heart work harder

• Keep other cardiovascular risk factors and other conditions like diabetes in check

• Take medications as prescribed

• Get an annual flu shot
Cardiac Rehabilitation

Cardiac “rehab” is a structured, supervised program to:

• Improve health and wellbeing of people with heart problems

• Provide:
  – Education about chronic angina and coronary artery disease
  – Tailored exercise training
  – Tips for a heart healthy diet
  – Strategies to reduce stress
  – Social support and coping skills
A cardiac rehab program:
• Focuses on lowering your risk
• Brings together doctors, nurses, exercise specialists, nutritionists, psychologists, and other health care specialists
You may be prescribed one or more of the following medications:

- **Antianginals**
- **Nitrates (nitroglycerin)** — help relax and open your blood vessels to allow more blood flow to the heart
- **Beta-blockers** — slow your heart rate and lower blood pressure so the heart doesn’t have to work as hard
- **Calcium channel blockers** — help blood vessels relax
- **Ranolazine** — a newer medication that helps improve blood flow

**Be sure to talk with your doctor about any side effects.**
The medication your doctor picks for you often depends on how frequently angina occurs and any other medications you take.

Antithrombotics (aspirin) are sometimes used to prevent blood clots from forming in your arteries, and reduce heart attack risk.

**Be sure to talk with your doctor about any side effects.**
Medical Procedures

Usually recommended if lifestyle change or medications aren’t enough. Procedures may include:

• Percutaneous coronary intervention (also called PCI or angioplasty)
  – Opens blocked or narrowed arteries by using a balloon to dilate narrowed arteries in the heart
  – Can include placement of stent to hold the artery open

• Coronary artery bypass graft surgery
  – Uses healthy arteries or veins taken from other areas of the body to bypass—or go around—the narrowed coronary artery

• Enhanced external counterpulsation
  – Large cuffs (similar to a BP cuff) are placed on each leg
  – Cuffs inflate and deflate with your heart beat to improve blood flow to heart muscle
  – Multiple treatment sessions
  – Not recommended for certain people (those with PAD, severe heart failure)
Medical Procedures, cont.

Best approach depends on:
- Location of blockages
- How severe any blockages are
- How many arteries are involved
- Your overall health
Your Health Care Team and Doctor Visits
Your Primary Care Doctor

Your primary care doctor can help:

- Monitor your overall and heart health
- Coordinate with or refer you to a cardiologist—a doctor who specializes in diseases of the heart and blood vessels
Your Nurse

Your nurse is an important part of your care team. He/she can:

• Answer questions
• Work closely with your doctors and help coordinate your care
• Educate you and your caregiver about this condition and treatment or procedure you may need
  – Help you understand the side effects of medications
  – Emphasize the importance of follow-up visits
  – Review lifestyle changes you may need to make
Your Cardiologist

A cardiologist will:

• Work with your family doctor to help diagnose and manage chronic angina

• Order additional tests to understand your overall heart health

• Give you tips about living well with angina

• Choose treatments that match your treatment goals and lifestyle needs
Your pharmacist can:

• Answer questions about your medications
• Educate you about appropriate use of medications
  – Review all of your medications
• Help you understand your insurance coverage of medications
• Assist with ways to adhere/take medications properly
Your Caregiver

A trusted friend or family member can:
• Provide support and encouragement
• Help you manage your medications
• Pitch in with heavy chores or other activities that require more effort
• Support you with lifestyle changes
• Help you follow your doctor’s instructions and weigh treatment options
Preparing for Your Appointment

• Be an active part of your health care team
• Bring a list of your current medications (dose, frequency), medical records, and insurance information
• Write down your health history and symptoms that you have experienced; for example:
  – Surgical procedures
  – Other serious illnesses/health issues
  – Major tests, especially if performed in previous year
• Know the chronic diseases and health conditions that run in your family so you can discuss with your healthcare provider
• Bring a family member/trusted friend to the appointment to help you remember what was said and to ask questions
  – Ask about your angina, steps you need to take and why it’s important
Preparing for Your Appointment, cont.

Be ready to report:
• When it happens
• Where you feel the pain or discomfort
• How often and for how long
• What makes it better/worse
• How it affects your life
  – Have you cut back on activities or work?
  – Is it affecting your family?
  – Your emotional wellbeing?
• Other concerns (e.g., side effects of treatment, diet and exercise, etc.)

Check out www.CardioSmart.org for tips and other resources.
Questions to Ask

Before each appointment, write down 4 or 5 key questions/concerns you would like to discuss:

• Can I prevent episodes of angina?
• How much exercise is right for me?
• Does chronic angina every go away?
• What’s the difference between angina and a heart attack? How can I tell the difference?
• When should I ideally be taking my medication to reduce angina pain and discomfort? Should I take nitroglycerin immediately prior to exercise?
• At what point would a procedure be recommended?
• How often will follow up appointments be needed?
• What else can I do to manage my risk for coronary artery disease/prevent it from getting worse?
What To Expect Long-Term

• Follow up appointments
• Close tracking of other risk factors
• Ongoing commitment to a heart healthy lifestyle
Living With Chronic Angina
Lifestyle modifications and other tips:
• Pace yourself
• Watch for signs that you might be overexerting yourself
• Find an exercise program that’s right for you
  – Make sure to warm up/cool down
• Share your feelings with your family and care team
Medication Safety

It’s important to:

• Take your medications exactly as directed
  – Skipping doses, altering timing can often cause an increase in angina

• Consult your health care professional before starting, changing, or stopping a prescription or over-the-counter medication

• Keep an updated list of all of the medications you take (including the amount/dose and how often)
  – This should include over-the-counter and herbal remedies
  – Review this list regularly with your healthcare providers
Know When It Might Be Something More

It’s important to remember:

• Angina can be dangerous
• Know what pattern is typical for you
• Pay attention to any changes in your symptoms
  – Do they begin to occur unexpectedly or while you are at rest?
• Be prepared to dial 9-1-1 if you think you need emergency care
  – Don’t chance it!
When To Call 9-1-1

Call 9-1-1 and chew an aspirin right away if your angina:

- Is no better 5 minutes after taking nitroglycerin
- Does not go away or seems to be getting worse
- Quickly returns after medication initially helped
Resources for Support and Information
Resources For Support

- **CardioSmart** — Patient education and support from the American College of Cardiology (ACC)
  - [www.CardioSmart.org](http://www.CardioSmart.org)

- **Speak from the Heart** — Patient education from Gilead Sciences
  - [www.SpeakFromtheHeart.com](http://www.SpeakFromtheHeart.com)
• **MedlinePlus** — Health information from the NIH/National Library of Medicine
  
  – [www.medlineplus.gov](http://www.medlineplus.gov) — Search for “chronic angina”

• **Mended Hearts** — one of the nation’s largest peer-to-peer support organizations
  
  – Mended Hearts connects patients with others who are facing a similar journey
  
  [www.mendedhearts.org](http://www.mendedhearts.org), 1-888-HEART99
THANK YOU!

- Meet your peers and share stories
- Introduce yourself to others
- Take home resources available to you
- Share your knowledge with family and caregivers