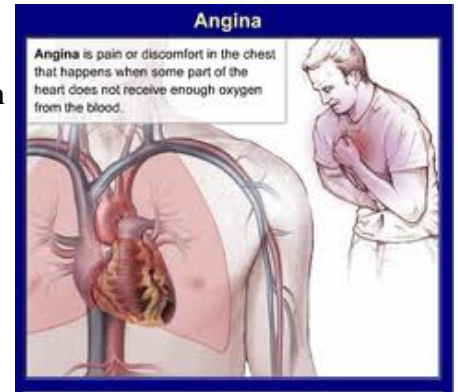


Angina

What Is Angina?

Angina is chest pain or discomfort that occurs if an area of your heart muscle doesn't get enough oxygen-rich blood. Angina may feel like pressure or squeezing in your chest. The pain also can occur in your shoulders, arms, neck, jaw, or back. Angina pain may even feel like indigestion. Angina isn't a disease; it's a symptom of an underlying heart problem. Angina usually is a symptom of coronary heart disease (CHD). CHD is the most common type of heart disease in adults. It occurs if a waxy substance called plaque builds up on the inner walls of your coronary arteries. These arteries carry oxygen-rich blood to your heart.



What are the Signs and Symptoms of Angina?

Pain and discomfort are the main symptoms of angina. Angina often is described as pressure, squeezing, burning, or tightness in the chest. The pain or discomfort usually starts behind the breastbone.

Pain from angina also can occur in the arms, shoulders, neck, jaw, throat, or back. The pain may feel like indigestion. Some people say that angina pain is hard to describe or that they can't tell exactly where the pain is coming from.

Signs and symptoms such as nausea (feeling sick to your stomach), fatigue (tiredness), shortness of breath, sweating, light-headedness, and weakness also may occur.

- Women are more likely to feel discomfort in the neck, jaw, throat, abdomen, or back. Shortness of breath is more common in older people and those who have diabetes. Weakness, dizziness, and confusion can mask the signs and symptoms of angina in elderly people.

- Symptoms also vary based on the type of angina you have.

- Because angina has so many possible symptoms and causes, all chest pain should be checked by a doctor. Chest pain that lasts longer than a few minutes and isn't relieved by rest or angina medicine may be a sign of a heart attack. Call 9-1-1 right away.

Stable vs. Unstable Angina

Stable Angina

Stable angina is the most common type of angina. It occurs when the heart is working harder than usual. Stable angina has a regular pattern. ("Pattern" refers to how often the angina occurs, how severe it is, and what factors trigger it.)

If you have stable angina, you can learn its pattern and predict when the pain will occur. The pain usually goes away a few minutes after you rest or take your angina medicine.

Stable angina isn't a heart attack, but it suggests that a heart attack is more likely to happen in the future.

Unstable Angina

Unstable angina doesn't follow a pattern. It may occur more often and be more severe than stable angina. Unstable angina also can occur with or without physical exertion, and rest or medicine may not relieve the pain.

Unstable angina is very dangerous and requires emergency treatment. This type of angina is a sign that a heart attack may happen soon.

Angina, continued

Treatment of Angina

Treatments for angina include lifestyle changes, medicines, medical procedures, cardiac rehabilitation, and other therapies. The main goals of treatment are to:

- Reduce pain and discomfort and how often it occurs
- Prevent or lower your risk for heart attack and death by treating your underlying heart condition

Lifestyle changes and medicines may be the only treatments needed if your symptoms are mild and aren't getting worse. If lifestyle changes and medicines don't control angina, you may need medical procedures or cardiac rehab.

Unstable angina is an emergency condition that requires treatment in a hospital.

