

# What is Angina or heart pain?

## What is angina?

Angina is pain in the chest that comes due to heart lacking oxygen. Heart is a large muscle that pumps blood to the whole body but if it does not get enough oxygen, it causes cramping or dull pain just like a cramp in the leg. The main cause of angina is narrowing of the coronary arteries.

## What are the symptoms?

Angina is a dull heavy pain in the centre of the chest. It is usually described as a pressure or heaviness or sometimes like indigestion. Pain can go to the neck, jaw, back and arms, usually the left arm. Additional symptoms may include shortness of breath, sweating and nausea.

## What brings on angina?

Angina comes during activity, and it goes off with rest. It can also come after a stressful situation, cold weather or after a heavy meal.

## What are the risks?

Smoking, high blood pressure, high cholesterol level, sedentary lifestyle, obesity and diabetes increase the risk of angina. There is a tendency for it to run in families.

## Is angina dangerous?

Angina is a warning sign that something should be done for the heart urgently. If it is ignored, a serious heart attack can happen. Angina does not cause any damage to the heart but if it is not treated on time, it can lead to the damage of the heart if a heart attack happens.

## What test can be done?

Simple ECG is normal in people having angina. Exercise ECG, also called exercise stress test, should be done in a patient having suspected angina. Diabetes, cholesterol, and blood pressure should be checked.

## What is the treatment?

### Self help:

Stop smoking.

If overweight, have a healthy diet plan and reduce your weight.

If sedentary lifestyle, increase your activity like walk for 30 minutes a day.

In case of stressful life, adopt relaxed attitude to life.

### **Medical help**

There are many medications which can help e.g., GTN. It is in the form of a tablet or a spray under the tongue and it helps relieve the pain. Aspirin is another medication which helps in thinning of the blood.

### **Warning signs of angina**

Angina symptoms which last longer than 10 minutes,

If three tablets of GTN does not relieve the pain,

Angina becoming more frequent.

Angina coming at rest.

Angina been more severe than usual.

Development of new symptoms like shortness of breath and sweating.

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