

Condition:



Angina

Covered in this fact sheet

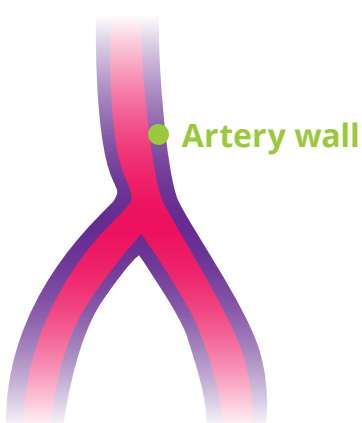
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What is Angina?

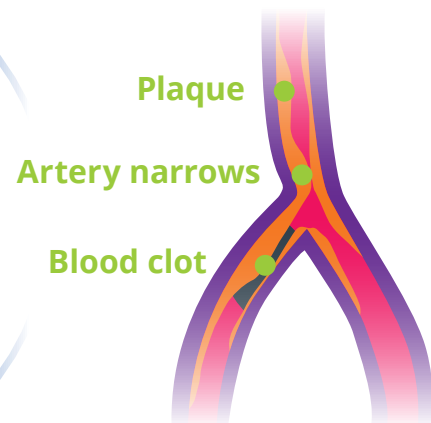
Angina is pain and tightening in the chest. However this can extend to the neck, left arm, jaw or back (these symptoms can also have other causes).

Narrowing of the arteries (blood vessels) makes it difficult for the blood to pass through.

Normal Artery



Blocked Artery



Angina falls under 2 main categories:

Stable angina

This is triggered by either physical exertion or stress. The symptoms improve with medication and/or rest. Stable angina is manageable but care needs to be taken that it does not develop into more problematic conditions.

Unstable angina

This type of angina does not have any obvious trigger and continues despite rest. It can develop from stable angina. Unstable angina needs to be treated as a medical emergency as this could be an indication of a heart attack or a stroke. Refer to heart attack or stroke factsheets.

Dyslexia and Work

Many people with angina can continue to work as before.

Manual work

If you do or are considering a physically demanding job, discuss this with your GP or cardiologist if you have any concerns. An exercise ECG test may be required to find out if the type of work you are considering is feasible.

Heavy machinery

If the job you do or are considering requires you to operate heavy machinery and you are on medication you will be required to check with your doctor if your medication is cause for any safety concerns.

Driving

If you have or are considering a driving job it would depend on your health and the condition of your heart and the physical challenges involved. You are NOT required to notify the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency).

However, driving should be stopped or not engaged in whilst experiencing Angina. Special regulations apply to bus, coach and lorry licences. Check on Government website.

Stress

Stress can bring on an angina attack. Unhealthy behaviours such as poor diet, sleep or a lack of exercise can all add to the levels of stress. Depending on the level of stress you experience and how it impacts on you, returning to work could be graduated following the initial diagnosis of Angina.

Low mood:

If you experience low mood after being diagnosed with Angina and this lasts for a few weeks, go and see your GP.

How do I know if I maybe having an Angina attack?

The main symptoms of angina are pain and tightening in the chest. However this can extend to the neck, left arm, jaw or back. These symptoms are very similar to a heart attack. There can also be other symptoms such as:

- Feeling sick
- Feeling unusually tired
- Dizziness
- Restlessness
- Breathlessness

Talking to you GP or other health care provider about your angina or other concerns

Your GP will firstly enquire if there was a trigger or patterns for the incident. Initial assessment would check for contributing factors such as:

- Blood pressure
- Weight and waist size measurements
- Blood tests to check cholesterol and glucose and also liver function.
- A urine test to check kidney function

Your GP will also check life style choices such as smoking, diet and alcohol consumption. The GP may also check if you have a family history of heart disease.

If your GP's assessment points to the possibility of angina further investigation may be required which may take the form of:

- Electrocardiogram (ECG), which records the electrical signals of the heart
- Coronary angiography may also be used to identify the area of the blockage.
- Myocardial perfusion scintigraphy (MPS), which is the use of a dye and a camera to view the insides of the arteries.
- Exercise tolerance test

Treatment for an Angina Attack

Two types of medication are taken

- The first is used when having an angina attack. However in some case it may be used before exercise or exertion to prevent an angina attack.
- Preventative treatments are used when angina has been diagnosed which will help avoid an attack.
- If this does not work surgery may be considered.

Managing and preventing Angina attacks

The coping process aims to:

- Reduce your risk of another Angina attack – through a combination of lifestyle changes and medication
- Gradually restore your physical fitness – so you can resume normal activities



Be Active: Regular exercise

Check with the relevant medical professional first but taking regular exercise will help with managing weight and also with supporting good mental wellbeing.



Watch your weight

Being overweight increases the strain on your heart. Being overweight not only increases your risk of another heart attack and other heart complications.



Take Notice: Relaxation

Relaxation skills could be helpful for reducing muscular tension and to unwind the mind. Relaxation techniques such as breathing techniques or doing something like reading a book, listening to music are helpful for many people.



Reduce or Stop Smoking

Smokers are encouraged to give it up as soon as possible. Find a buddy to support you. NHS support is offered free: www.nhs.uk/smokefree



Reduce alcohol consumption

Follow tips on cutting down and take up activities that reduce your chances of consuming alcohol e.g. meet friend at the gym and chat whilst working out as opposed to meeting in the pub.



Healthy Eating

Eating a healthy balance diet can help you to keep a healthy weight, give you the energy and vitamins your body needs as well as helping you to feel your best. Cutting out sugary drinks and snacks and trying to maintain your “5 a day” is a great place to start.



Reduce stress

There may be something specific that is causing your stress. Speak to your friends or family about it and find a solution a way to cope with stressful situations. Also find ways of preventing stressful situations. A little stress will not do you harm.

Useful links

