

# Healthy Living After a Heart Attack: Angina

Your heart is an incredible organ.

It beats night and day, throughout your life, supplying your body with the oxygen-rich blood it needs.

However, when you have heart disease, your heart may not get enough oxygen-rich blood itself.

This happens because the coronary arteries that supply your heart with blood become narrowed and hardened. This is called coronary artery disease, or atherosclerosis.

If your heart does not get enough oxygen, you may experience angina.

Angina is a symptom. It is not a disease. Angina can feel like a sharp pain or a squeezing or pressure in your chest.

It may also occur in your arm, neck, jaw, or back.

And it may be accompanied by nausea, lightheadedness or shortness of breath.

Women may experience angina differently than men.

Women may not notice typical chest pain but may notice nausea, vomiting, feeling out of breath, abdominal pain, or sharp chest pain.

Angina may come on during exercise, or it may occur at random times.

Angina may be stable or unstable. Stable angina is a recurring chest pain or discomfort that occurs during physical activity. It usually goes away quickly during rest.

Unstable angina often occurs during rest and can last for a long time. It is very dangerous and requires emergency medical attention.

If you experience any type of chest pain, or if your chest pain changes or gets worse, it's important to contact your healthcare provider right away.

If you are diagnosed with angina, you will likely be given medicine to stop your angina pain.

The most common medicine for angina is nitroglycerin. This medicine is taken when the pain begins. It causes the arteries to relax and widen so your heart gets more blood.

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If your angina becomes worse despite resting, does not respond to nitroglycerin, or lasts longer than 15 minutes call 911.

You may also be given other medicine to protect your heart and treat underlying conditions, such as high blood pressure and high cholesterol.

And lifestyle changes can help reduce your angina symptoms. Lifestyle changes may include improving your diet, getting the right amount of physical activity, and quitting smoking or losing weight.

It's important to understand that angina is not a heart attack, but it is a symptom of heart disease and can mean you are at higher risk of a heart attack.

If you suspect you have angina, talk to your healthcare provider about steps you can take to diagnose and treat your angina.

If you have been diagnosed with angina, it's important to take your medicine as prescribed, follow your lifestyle recommendations, and keep regular healthcare appointments.