

# Understanding Angina

When your heart isn't getting enough oxygen, you may feel chest pain or discomfort. This condition is called Angina (AN-juh-nuh) or Angina (an-JI-nuh).

Angina can be a sign of heart disease or other heart-related problems. The good news is you can manage it and continue to enjoy your life.

Angina often starts as an aching, tightening, or squeezing discomfort in the chest. This discomfort may spread to the neck, jaw, arms, or back.

Other symptoms of angina can include: sweating, shortness of breath, fatigue, indigestion, and nausea.

To better understand angina, let's take a look at the heart.

The heart is a muscle that pumps blood throughout the body. To do its job, the heart needs oxygen and nutrients. These are supplied by large blood vessels called coronary arteries.

The harder and faster the heart pumps, the more oxygen-rich blood it needs.

The main cause of angina is Coronary Artery Disease.

Coronary artery disease develops when fatty deposits called plaque build up on the walls of the coronary arteries.

As the plaque builds up, it can start to block the coronary arteries, causing less blood to get to the heart.

This can lead to angina.

If coronary artery disease gets worse, blood clots or plaque can completely block the artery. This can cause a heart attack.

Heart disease is the leading cause of death in the United States.

Angina can be stable or unstable.

Stable angina means it has a pattern. Your symptoms tend to last for a certain amount of time. And they occur when you do certain activities that stress the heart.

These are called triggers. Symptoms are relieved by rest or medicine.

Unstable angina can occur without any cause or trigger. It can even happen at rest. Symptoms are not relieved by rest or medicine.

Unstable angina is a danger sign. Get medical help right away if you have this type of angina.

When you have angina, it's important to know your triggers and symptoms.

What symptoms do you have? What activities and conditions trigger those symptoms?

# Understanding Angina

How long does an episode of angina last? What do you do to relieve an episode?

Write down this information, along with anything else you think may be important.

Talk with your healthcare provider about your concerns.

Alert your healthcare team immediately if you have: symptoms that suddenly change or get worse; pain that lasts longer than usual; or pain that does not go away with rest or medicine.

Call 911 if you ever feel your angina is getting worse or if you think you may be having a heart attack.