

Types of Chest Pain

This table explains some of the common causes, signs and symptoms of chest pain. Please remember that this information is a guide only.

DO NOT USE FOR DIAGNOSIS. If symptoms persist, or you become unsure or concerned, please speak with your doctor.

Name	Cause of chest pain	Symptoms of chest pain	Location of pain	How to relieve chest pain
Angina	Angina occurs when there isn't enough oxygen-rich blood flowing to part of your heart. Angina is caused by narrowed coronary arteries.	♥ discomfort ♥ tightness ♥ pressure ♥ squeezing ♥ heaviness ♥ dull ache Additional symptoms may include: ♥ nausea ♥ shortness of breath ♥ strange feeling or tingling/numbness in the neck, back, arm, jaw or shoulders ♥ light headedness ♥ irregular heart beat	♥ May be felt in the centre of the chest or across the chest, into the throat or jaw, down the arms, between the shoulder blades ♥ Unstable angina may be unrelated to activity or stress, comes on more frequently or takes longer to ease Angina symptoms can gradually get worse over 2 to 5 minutes. Angina usually lasts less than 15 minutes	♥ Rest ♥ Anginine – dissolved under the tongue or Nitrolingual spray-sprayed under the tongue
Heart Attack	A heart attack happens when plaque cracks inside the narrowed coronary artery - causing a blood clot to form. If the blood clot totally blocks the artery, the heart muscle becomes damaged	♥ similar to angina however last longer than 15 minutes and are not relieved by rest, Anginine or Nitrolingual spray Additional symptoms may include: ♥ nausea ♥ vomiting ♥ pale skin ♥ shortness of breath ♥ sweating Heart attacks can also occur with unusual chest pain or no pain	♥ unable to pinpoint exact spot ♥ May be felt in the centre of the chest or across the chest, into the throat or jaw, down the arms, between the shoulder blades	A heart attack is a medical emergency. If pain is not relieved by Anginine or Nitrolingual spray in 10 to 15 minutes, call 000 for an ambulance. Stop any physical activity

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'Stent' Pain	Stent pain is quite common after a coronary stent is inserted and is thought to be caused by stretching of the artery during the procedure.	• sharp • niggling • localized • fleeting • comes and goes • not related to physical activity	• middle or left side of chest • can usually pin point the spot where it hurts	• relaxation Symptoms will disappear with time as stent settles in
Pericarditis	Pericarditis is irritation and swelling "inflammation" of the hearts sac that surrounds the heart. Causes include: • viral infection • heart attack • (Dressler's Syndrome) – usually occurs 2-5 weeks after heart attack • recent heart surgery	• sharp • stabbing • pain not relieved with rest Additional symptoms may include: • fever • weakness • shortness of breath • coughing • heart palpitations (feeling your heart beating faster)	• middle or left side of chest and can travel to one or both shoulders • pain worse when lying down and deep breathing	• sitting up and leaning forward
Musculoskeletal pain after open heart surgery	It is common to have some chest discomfort after your surgery as your muscles, ligaments, bones, nerves and wounds are healing	• aches (dull or sharp) • pains • numbness or tingling on chest • skin feels sensitive	• middle or left side of chest • may last for 6 months or more	• try holding a pillow or towel against your chest when you cough or sneeze • try a different position • use pain killers regularly • try massaging and touching chest around the wound to desensitize the nerves

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Pulmonary embolism or "PE"	A pulmonary embolism occurs when there is a sudden blockage, usually caused by a blood clot, of an artery in the lung	♥ sharp or stabbing chest pain - worse when you take a deep breath ♥ burning, aching, dull or heavy sensation in chest ♥ sudden shortness of breath ♥ cough that can produce blood stained mucus Additional symptoms may include: ♥ fast heart rate ♥ sweaty, clammy skin ♥ dizziness or light headedness	♥ middle or on one side of chest	A pulmonary embolism is a medical emergency. ♥ doctors will prescribe medications to dissolve the clot and prevent clots from getting larger
Gastro Oesophageal Reflux Disease "GORD"	GORD occurs when stomach acid leaks from the stomach into the oesophagus (food pipe)	♥ burning chest pain, pressure, discomfort or "heartburn" - often worse after eating ♥ chest pain not likely to be associated with physical activity or exercise	♥ middle or on one side of chest which can move up to neck and throat	♥ sitting up or standing upright ♥ antacid medication ♥ avoiding certain foods and drinks
Anxiety	The body's stress response causes: ♥ tightening of the chest and rib cage muscles ♥ stomach and intestinal distress causing chest pain	Pain can be described as: ♥ sharp, shooting or burning ♥ pressure or chest tension Pain can range from slight to severe and can be related to episodes of nervousness, anxiety, fear or elevated stress	♥ can be located all over chest area and spread to upper back	♥ stress management ♥ relaxation - deep breathing ♥ rest