



## **General Info about Chest Pain**

Chest pain is a common symptom which can be caused by many different conditions. Some causes of chest pain require prompt medical attention, such as angina, heart attack, or tearing of the aorta. Other causes of chest pain can be evaluated electively, such as spasm of the esophagus, gallbladder attack, or inflammation of the chest wall. Therefore, an accurate diagnosis is important in providing proper treatment to patients with chest pain. The cause of chest pain can range from an ordinary, harmless muscle pull to serious cardiac complication ultimately leading to cardiac arrest.

### **What are the causes of Chest Pain ?**

In caring for patients with chest pain, the doctor distinguishes whether the pain is related to a lack of oxygen to the heart muscle (as in angina or heart attack), or is due to another process. Many conditions are considered that can cause chest pain which is similar to that of a heart attack or angina.

#### **Some common causes:**

- Anxiety.
- Trauma with injury to the chest.
- Asthma.
- Cough (especially if long-term).
- Indigestion (heartburn, gastroesophageal reflux disease)
- Angina - This is a condition in which lipids and fats are deposited inside the arteries leading to thrombosis and other heart diseases.
- Gastric ulcer.
- Costochondritis - inflammation of the cartilage at the end of the ribs next to the breastbone.
- Pulmonary embolism (blood clot to the lungs) .
- Pneumothorax - bursting of the tiny air sacs in the lung tissue.

- Aortic dissection (a tear in the lining of the aorta).

### **What are the symptoms of Chest Pain ?**

- Chest pain or pressure of mid sternal (under the breastbone) or slightly to the left may radiate to shoulder, arm, jaw, neck, back or other areas.
- Feeling of tightness, squeezing, crushing, burning, choking, or aching similar to "gas" or indigestion.
- No sharp localized pain.
- Precipitated by activity, stress or exertion. Usually for short duration, 1 to 15 minutes and relieved by rest.
- Chest pain radiating to the left arm is more likely to be related to a heart condition such as Angina and sometimes is an early sign of heart attack.

### **How can we diagnose Chest Pain ?**

A blood pressure check up to see the change in blood pressure.

ECG changes during exercise tolerance (treadmill) testing and at rest confirm the diagnosis of angina. A transient heart murmur or arrhythmias (irregular heart beats) may be present.

Heart scans or an angiography of the heart are done to confirm the problem.

### **How can Chest Pain be treated ?**

- Angina symptoms usually improve with treatment.
- Rest is advised if chest pain occurs.
- Medicines for angina usually prevent the pain. Medicines are also given to control cholesterol, blood pressure, and abnormal heart rhythms.
- Unstable angina is a severe condition and usually requires hospitalization. Surgical procedures such as coronary artery bypass grafting (CABG) or (PTCA) balloon angioplasty may be necessary.

- Always carry your medicines with you if you are advised to take them to control angina. Some tablets like Sorbitrate are used and kept under the tongue to relieve pain. Keep the medicines in your wallet and at your bedside.

### **Learn More About Chest Pain**

- The best prevention is to modify the risk factors that can be changed. Some studies have shown that modifying risk factors can prevent the progression of arterial blockages and can even lead to a decrease in the severity of blockages.
- Stop smoking.
- Reduce weight, if you are overweight.
- Control blood pressure, diabetes, and cholesterol
- Cultivate a relaxed attitude and avoid stress.

### **Frequently asked questions about Chest Pain**

- Which doctor should I consult for chest pain?
- You can go to a General Physician and if symptoms are prolonged you can visit a Cardiologist.

### **Are all chest pains "angina" ?**

Not all chest pain is from the heart, and not all pain from the heart is angina. If the pain lasts for less than 30 seconds or if it goes away during a deep breath after drinking a glass of water, or by changing position, it almost certainly is not angina and should not cause concern. But prolonged pain, unrelieved by rest and accompanied by other symptoms should be taken seriously.

### **Are all chest pains dangerous?**

- No. All chest pains are not dangerous. A medical checkup will tell you whether your pain is dangerous.