Living with Angina

What is Angina?
Angina is chest pain or discomfort that occurs if an area of your heart muscle doesn’t get enough oxygen-rich blood. This discomfort can be described as: a burning sensation, pain, pressure, squeezing, or tightness in the chest, or symptoms may be atypical and subtle.

What are the Causes of Angina?
Plaque build-up may severely narrow arteries and limit the amount of oxygen-rich blood that can reach the heart, particularly during times when there is high demand for oxygen, such as during exercise or strenuous activity. This increased demand may trigger angina.

Angina can be triggered by one of the “4 Es”:
• Exercise
• Emotional stress
• Eating a large meal
• Extreme cold

What are the Symptoms of Angina?
Angina is most commonly felt in the chest. It is often described as a discomfort, but it can also be described as a burning sensation, pain, pressure, squeezing, or even tightness.

Women Can Feel Angina Differently Than Men
While chest pain is the #1 symptom of angina for women and men, women are more likely to report other signs and symptoms of angina, such as:
• Pain or discomfort in the jaw, shoulders or neck
• Pain in either or both arms or back

• Indigestion
• Lightheadedness or weakness
• Nausea, fatigue
• Shortness of breath

What’s the Difference Between Angina and a Heart Attack?
During a heart attack, plaque that has built up over time in the artery can crack. This can cause a blood clot to form that blocks the artery, leading to a heart attack.
• Angina is usually predictable and usually doesn’t last longer than a few minutes.
• Angina usually goes away with rest and/or medicine within a few minutes.
• If your angina changes, gets worse or doesn’t go away, seek immediate medical help.

Is it Angina or a Heart Attack?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Does my angina ...</th>
<th>Angina</th>
<th>Possible Heart Attack</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... feel worse or different than usual?</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... go away with rest or medicine?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... happen with one of the 4 Es?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Maybe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... go away after a few minutes?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... occur during rest?</td>
<td>Not usually</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If you are in doubt ... CALL 911!

(continued on next page)
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Diagnosis and Meeting with Your Doctor
It’s very important that you share all of the details about your condition with your doctor so he or she can make an accurate diagnosis and help manage your condition. Be proactive when meeting with your doctor and prepare questions in advance. Good communication is a two-way street that requires you and your doctor to work together.

Tests and Procedures
The first time you meet with your doctor to discuss signs that may be angina, he or she will focus on determining if you have angina or something else. Your doctor will ask you details about your personal and family health history, assess your risk factors and perform a physical exam.

In addition, your doctor may order certain tests to help provide the appropriate diagnosis, such as:
- Labs
- EKG/ECG
- Stress imaging
- Echocardiogram
- Exercise testing (stress test)

Treatment for Angina
Work with your doctor to find the best angina treatment plan for you. Your individual plan will depend on how severe your symptoms are and your risk for heart disease. Most treatment plans involve lifestyle changes, such as eating a heart-healthy diet, being active regularly, quitting smoking and managing blood pressure, diabetes, cholesterol and weight. Along with lifestyle changes, your doctor will typically prescribe medication to reduce your symptoms and also reduce your risk for heart attack. Your plan may also include medical procedures, such as angioplasty or stenting and cardiac rehabilitation.

Steps You Can Take to Help Manage Your Angina

- Develop a daily routine for your activities and medications.
- Pace yourself during activities.
- Be physically active every day or at least five days a week for 30 minutes. Be sure to talk with your doctor before beginning an exercise program.
- Monitor and control your risk factors like blood pressure, blood glucose, maintain a healthy body weight, etc.
- Learn to manage your stress levels and get a full night’s sleep.
- Tell your doctor how your angina feels and whether it has changed in any way.
- Keep a written list of all your medicines and their doses. This includes prescription drugs as well as over-the-counter and herbal supplements.
- Show your doctor your medicine list during every visit.
- Keep nitroglycerin with you, and make sure family members know where it is at all times.
- Share and discuss your feelings with family and friends.

Source: Preventive Cardiovascular Nurses Association
http://pcna.net/patients/angina

If you think you might be having a heart attack, don’t delay — call 911. Use your instincts, and listen to your body — even if you are not sure. Don’t be embarrassed to death. Call 911.
Before each visit to your cardiologist, complete this Chronic Angina Checklist. Bring it with you to share how angina is affecting your quality of life. The checklist is also available to complete online at www.speakfromtheheart.com.

1. In the past month, how many episodes of angina have you had?
   - None
   - 1-4
   - 5-8
   - 9 or more

2. Have you limited or totally given up any activities or work because of your angina?  □ No  □ Yes
   If yes, what? Explain: ________________________________________________________________

3. Do you ever have angina when you are:
   - Resting
   - Dressing or bathing
   - Walking at an ordinary pace
   - Walking uphill or quickly
   - Climbing stairs
   - Doing general housework/yardwork
   - Having emotional stress
   - Being sexually active
   - Moving heavy objects
   - In hot or cold weather
   - Eating large meals
   - Smoking cigarettes
   - Other

4. How much has angina affected your quality of life?
   - Not at all
   - Somewhat
   - A lot

5. Do you wish more could be done to reduce your angina?  □ Yes  □ No

6. Is there anything else you’d like your doctor to know about your angina?
   ________________________________________________________________

7. What other topics do you want to discuss with your doctor?
   - Managing medication side effects
   - Diet and exercise
   - Treatment options
   - Other

*If you experience angina that doesn't go away with rest or nitroglycerin, seek medical attention immediately.