



# How to Manage Your Angina

Angina is a term for feelings of pain, pressure, heaviness, or numbness across the chest. Angina occurs when your heart muscle doesn't receive enough blood flow. Pain can also occur in your neck, jaw, shoulders, or arms.

Angina can happen:

- During exercise or other physical activity, or times of emotional stress.
- After you stop exercising while you're cooling down.

Typically, angina goes away completely when you rest.

If angina pain continues and lasts more than 15 minutes, it can be a sign of heart attack. Heart attack happens when the heart's blood supply is so limited that it doesn't get enough oxygen. The heart muscle can be damaged if blood flow and oxygen are restricted for too long. (See the chart comparing angina with heart attack.)

## What's my angina pattern?

Angina patterns differ from person to person. For example, one person may feel neck pain during exercise that goes away with rest. Another person may

have chest pain when climbing stairs and need medication to feel better.

It's important to understand your specific angina pattern, including:

- Triggers – what seems to cause it
- Frequency – how often it happens
- Severity – how strong the symptoms are
- Location – where you feel it
- Quality – what it feels like
- Relievers – what makes the symptoms go away

	ANGINA	vs.	HEART ATTACK
<b>Brought on by:</b>	Activity or emotional stress that may increase heart rate and blood pressure.		Blockage or spasm in the artery that's not necessarily related to activity.
<b>Duration and pain:</b>	A few minutes, up to 15 minutes.		Longer than 15 minutes.
<b>Symptoms:</b>	<p>Pain, pressure, tightness, heaviness, or numbness across the chest.</p> <p>Pain may radiate to the neck, jaw, arms, upper back, or shoulders.</p>		<p>Same as angina, but can be more severe. Other symptoms may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sweating (usually a cold sweat)</li> <li>• Squeezing</li> <li>• Crushing</li> <li>• Intense burning</li> <li>• Aching</li> <li>• Shortness of breath</li> <li>• Dizziness</li> <li>• Fainting</li> <li>• Nausea or vomiting</li> <li>• Unusual weakness</li> <li>• Rapid or irregular heartbeat</li> <li>• Change in heart rate or rhythm</li> <li>• Sense of impending (coming) doom</li> </ul>
<b>Treatment:</b>	Relieved by rest or nitroglycerin.		Not relieved by nitroglycerin. <b>Call 911 or have someone drive you to the nearest Emergency Department.</b>

Please note down your angina pattern and track it over time (keep an angina pattern diary). Tell your doctor or care manager if the pattern changes.

## What medication is used to treat angina?

Nitroglycerin is the medication most often used to manage angina. It opens (dilates) your blood vessels. This increases blood flow and gives your heart the oxygen it needs to function. If your doctor prescribes nitroglycerin, you can use these guidelines:

- Keep the medication with you at all times.
- Don't carry the container close to your body. Keep it in a cool place, such as a purse, briefcase, or coat pocket.
- Don't store the container in the refrigerator, bathroom, or other places that can be damp.
- Keep your tablets in the original brown container with the lid tightly closed. Or use an approved nitroglycerin carrying case purchased from a pharmacy.
- Write the date on each new container when you open it. If the bottle contains cotton, remove it after opening.
- Get a fresh supply of tablets 6 months after you open a container. Throw away the old tablets and container.

- Talk with your doctor or clinician if you plan to do an activity that's triggered your angina in the past. They may advise taking nitroglycerin before starting the activity.
- Ask your doctor or clinician if it's safe to take nitroglycerin if you take Levitra, Viagra, or Cialis for erectile dysfunction.

## What should I do if I have symptoms?

1. Stop what you're doing and rest.
  2. Place a nitroglycerin tablet\* under your tongue. Let it dissolve. Don't chew or swallow. It's absorbed directly through your mouth's lining.
- \* DON'T take nitroglycerin if you've taken Viagra, Levitra, or Cialis in the last 72 hours.
3. If you take nitroglycerin and rest for 5 minutes but still have symptoms, take a second nitroglycerin tablet.
  4. If you still have symptoms 5 minutes after taking the second tablet, **call 911 emergency services or have someone drive you** to the nearest emergency room. Don't drive yourself.
  5. While waiting for the ambulance you can place one nitroglycerin tablet under your tongue every 5 minutes until your pain goes away or the ambulance arrives.

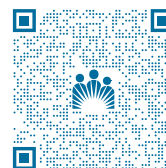
## How can I reduce my risk of heart disease?

By making healthier choices, you can ease your angina pain and lower your heart attack and stroke risks.

- Quit smoking. This is the most important step to lower your heart disease risks and help prevent many other health problems.
- Cut back on unhealthy fats, such as fatty meats, cheese, fried food, and processed and packaged foods.
- Eat more fish and high-fiber foods, such as vegetables, fruits, whole grains (oatmeal), beans, and peas.
- Exercise regularly. Start with 10 minutes of physical activity daily. Work up to 30+ minutes of exercise, 5 days a week.
- Manage diabetes and high blood pressure, if you have these conditions.
- Manage stress and get enough sleep and rest.



For help with making healthy lifestyle changes, visit [kpdoc.org/wellnesscoaching](http://kpdoc.org/wellnesscoaching).



An emergency medical condition is (1) a medical or psychiatric condition that manifests itself by acute symptoms of sufficient severity (including severe pain) such that you could reasonably expect the absence of immediate medical attention to result in serious jeopardy to your health or body functions or organs; or (2) active labor when there isn't enough time for safe transfer to a Plan hospital (or designated hospital) before delivery, or if transfer poses a threat to your (or your unborn child's) health and safety.

This information is not intended to diagnose or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult with your doctor. If you have questions or need more information about your medication, please speak to your pharmacist. Kaiser Permanente does not endorse the medications or products mentioned. Any trade names listed are for easy identification only. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.