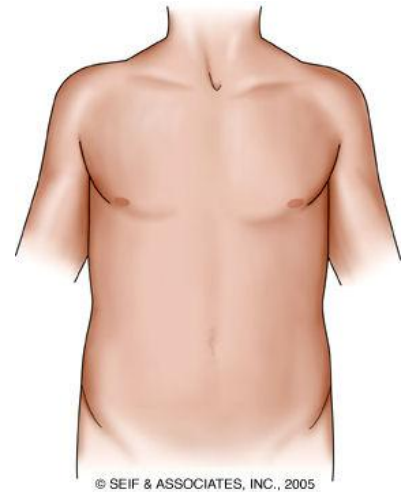


Chest Pain (Non-Specific)

Today you have had an exam and tests to determine a specific cause for your chest pain. It is often hard to give a specific diagnosis as the cause of one's chest pain. There is always a chance that your pain could be related to something serious, like a heart attack or a blood clot in the lungs. You need to follow up with your caregiver for further evaluation. More lab tests or other studies such as x-rays, an electrocardiogram, stress testing, or cardiac imaging may be needed to find the cause of your pain.

Most of the time nonspecific chest pain will be improved within 2-3 days of rest and mild pain medicine. For the next few days avoid physical exertion or activities that bring on the pain. Do not smoke or drink alcohol until all your symptoms are gone. Quitting smoking is the number one way to reduce your risk for heart and lung disease. Call your caregiver for routine follow-up as advised.



CAUSES

- **Heart burn** is caused by stomach acid going back up into the esophagus. The esophagus is the tube between the mouth and the stomach. The acid burns the sensitive inner layer of the esophagus. This causes pain which is felt in the chest under the breast bone. Heart burn is also called GERD (*gastroesophageal reflux disease*).
- Pneumonia or bronchitis can cause painful irritation of the lung tissues.
- Anxiety and stress may cause tightness in the chest associated with pain.
- Inflammation around your heart (*pericarditis*) or lung (*pleuritis*, or *pleurisy*) may cause chest pain.
- A blood clot can develop in the lung and cause chest pain.
- A collapsed lung (*pneumothorax*) can cause chest pain. It can develop suddenly on its own (a *spontaneous pneumothorax*) or from trauma to the chest.
- The chest wall is composed of bones, muscles and cartilage. Any of these can be the source of the pain:
 - The bones can be bruised by injury.
 - The muscles or cartilage can be strained by coughing or overwork.
 - The cartilage can also be affected by inflammation and become sore (*costochondritis*).

TREATMENT

Treatment depends on what may be causing your chest pain. Treatment may include:

- Acid blockers for heart burn.
- Anti-inflammatory medicine.
- Pain medicine for inflammatory conditions.
- Antibiotics if an infection is present.

You may be advised to change lifestyle habits that may add to your chest pain. These include stopping smoking, caffeine and chocolate. You may be also advised to keep your head elevated when sleeping. This reduces the chance of acid going backward from your stomach to your esophagus.

HOME CARE INSTRUCTIONS

- If antibiotics were prescribed, take the full amount even if you are feeling better.
- Continue physical activities as directed.
- Only take over-the-counter or prescription medicine for pain, discomfort or fever as directed by your caregiver.
- Follow your caregiver's suggestions for further testing if problems persist.
- If your caregiver has given you a follow-up appointment, it is very important to keep that appointment. Not keeping the appointment could result in a chronic or permanent injury, pain, and disability. If there is any problem keeping the appointment, you must call back to this facility for assistance.

SEEK MEDICAL CARE IF:

- You are having problems that you think may be side effects of the medicine you are taking. Read your medication instructions carefully.
- Your chest pain persists even after following advised treatments.
- You develop a rash on your chest with blisters.

SEEK IMMEDIATE MEDICAL CARE IF:

- Increased chest pain, or pain that spreads to the arm, neck, jaw, back or abdomen.
- Shortness of breath, increasing cough or coughing up blood.
- Severe back or abdominal pain, nausea or vomiting.
- Severe weakness, fainting, fever or chills.

THIS IS AN EMERGENCY. Do not wait to see if the pain will go away. Get medical help at once. Call Your Local Emergency Department (911 in the U.S.). **Do not** drive yourself to the hospital.

MAKE SURE YOU:

- Understand these instructions.
- Will watch your condition.
- Will get help right away if you are not doing well or get worse.

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