



# Angina

## What is angina?

Commonly mistaken for a heart attack, *angina pectoris* is a Latin phrase that means “strangling in the chest.” Patients describe angina as a squeezing, suffocating, or burning feeling in their chest. Fortunately, the heart muscle is not damaged forever like in a heart attack, and the pain usually subsides with rest. However, angina is a symptom of coronary artery disease.

## How do I know I’m having angina, and how do I get it diagnosed?

The pain traditionally starts in the center of the chest and then radiates to your left arm, neck, back, throat, or jaw. You may have numbness or a loss of feeling in your arms, shoulders, or wrists. Luckily, the episodes are brief, but if the pain lasts longer than a few minutes, you should seek immediate medical attention. Once you seek help, doctors can easily diagnose the cause of your angina by discussing your symptoms with you and running a few tests such as x-rays, exercise electrocardiography (ECG or EKG), a nuclear stress test, coronary angiography, and blood tests to check the levels of certain proteins in your blood.