



**Wrightington, Wigan and  
Leigh Teaching Hospitals**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Chest Pain

# Chest Pain

Most chest pain is not a sign of anything serious, but you should get medical advice just in case. Get immediate medical help if you think you're having a heart attack.

## Immediate Action Required

### Call 999 if:

- You have sudden chest pain that:
  - spreads to your arms, back, neck, or jaw
  - makes your chest feel tight or heavy
  - also started with shortness of breath, sweating, and feeling or being sick
  - lasts more than 15 minutes

You could be having a heart attack. Call 999 immediately as you need immediate treatment in hospital.

## Non-Urgent Advice

### See a GP if:

- you have chest pain that comes and goes
- you have chest pain that goes away quickly but you're still worried

It's important to get medical advice to make sure it's nothing serious.

## Common Causes of Chest Pain

Chest pain has many different causes. In most cases, chest pain is not caused by a heart problem. Your symptoms might give you an idea of the cause. Don't self-diagnose – see a GP if you're worried.

Possible Causes	Chest Pain Symptoms	Possible Cause
Starts after eating, bringing up food or bitter-tasting fluids, feeling full and bloated	Heartburn or indigestion	
Starts after chest injury or chest exercise, feels better when resting	Muscle chest sprain or strain	
Triggered by worries or a stressful situation, heartbeat gets faster, sweating, dizziness	Anxiety or panic attack	
Gets worse when you breathe in and out, coughing up yellow or green mucus, high temperature	Chest infection or pneumonia	
Tingling feeling on skin, skin rash appears that turns into blisters	Shingles	

## Chest Pain and Heart Problems

The most common heart problems that cause chest pain include:

- **Pericarditis** – which usually causes a sudden, sharp, stabbing pain that gets worse when you breathe deeply or lie down.
- **Angina or a heart attack** – which have similar symptoms but a heart attack is life-threatening.

You're more likely to have heart problems if you're older or know you're at risk of coronary heart disease. For example, if you:

- smoke
- are very overweight (obese)
- have high blood pressure, diabetes, or high cholesterol
- have a history of heart attacks or angina in family members under 60 years old

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