

Chest Pain, Noncardiac

What is noncardiac chest pain?

Chest pain is discomfort that is felt anywhere between your neck and belly button. Noncardiac chest pain is pain that is **not** caused by a heart problem. Because it is very important to determine the cause, always see your healthcare provider if you have chest pain.

What is the cause?

Chest pain can be caused by heart problems, but many common causes of chest pain are not related to a heart problem. For example, chest pain may be caused by:

- Swallowing disorders such as esophageal spasm, caused by the muscles of the lower esophagus squeezing painfully due to acid reflux or stress
- Gastrointestinal disorders such as heartburn, which is stomach acid backing up into the esophagus
- Lung disease such as bronchitis or pneumonia
- Problems affecting the ribs or chest muscles such as muscle strain or inflammation of the rib joints or muscles
- Anxiety or panic attacks
- Inflammation of the lining of the lungs (called pleuritis or pleurisy)

How is it diagnosed?

Keeping notes about your chest pain will help your healthcare provider make the diagnosis. Write down:

- What the pain feels like, such as stabbing, dull, pressure, or burning
- When it happens and how long it lasts
- Where it hurts
- What makes it better
- What makes it worse
- Any other symptoms, such as nausea, vomiting, sweating, or trouble breathing

Your provider will ask about your symptoms and medical history and examine you. You may have the following tests:

- Electrocardiogram (ECG)
- Exercise stress test
- Echocardiogram (ultrasound scan of the heart)
- Cardiac angiogram (cardiac catheterization)
- Blood tests
- X-rays, such as an upper GI exam
- Tests of your esophagus

How is it treated?

After your provider has confirmed that the chest pain is not caused by a heart problem, he or she will recommend treatment for the problem that is causing the pain.

When should I call my healthcare provider?

Tell your provider if you keep having noncardiac chest pain or if it is getting worse while you are following the treatment your provider recommends. You may need a different medicine or change in dosage, a different treatment, or more tests.

If you have new or different chest pain, call your healthcare provider. Call 911 for emergency help right away if you have symptoms of a heart attack. The most common symptoms of a heart attack include:

- Chest pain or pressure, squeezing, or fullness in the center of your chest that lasts more than a few minutes, or goes away and comes back (may feel like indigestion or heartburn)
- Pain or discomfort in one or both arms or shoulders, or in your back, neck, jaw, or stomach
- Trouble breathing
- Breaking out in a cold sweat for no known reason

Along with these symptoms of heart attack, you may also feel very tired, faint, or be sick to your stomach.

If you live in an area where there is no 911 or ambulance service, have someone drive you to the closest emergency room right away. You can also call the closest law enforcement agency (police, sheriff, or highway patrol) to help drive you to the emergency room.

Developed by RelayHealth.

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