

Angina...

A tight constricting sensation across the chest, accompanied by pain which moves up the neck and jaw and down the arms, particularly the left side. This may be accompanied by dizziness, nausea and difficulty in breathing. Such symptoms require immediate medical attention. Angina is caused by a fall in blood supply to the heart, and occurs when the demands on the heart are increased through overexertion, excitement, stress, high blood pressure or structural changes to the blood vessels supplying the heart. Angina is an early symptom of coronary heart disease.

Prevention.

Do not smoke. Reduce intake of saturated fats (red meat, full-fat dairy products, confectionery made with fat, savoury snacks containing fat, and fried foods). Eat moderate amounts of poultry, skimmed milk and low fat cheeses and spread. Use olive oil on salads and when cooking. Try to adopt a regular exercise routine: walking and swimming are helpful. Take measures to reduce stress.

Treatment - Practical advice.

Stop smoking. If you experience angina attacks at night, tilt the head of your bed up by 3 or 4 inches to reduce the pressure of blood on your heart. If an attack still occurs at night, sit on the edge of the bed with your feet on the ground, allowing the blood to flow into your legs.

Dietary

Eating the wrong foods can raise your blood pressure and promote an attack of angina:

Reduce intake of animal fats (found in meat, dairy produce and eggs). Avoid salt. Increase intake of fibre, found in wholegrain cereals, fresh fruit and vegetables. Eat fish regularly (sardines, herring, salmon, trout, mackerel). Incorporate raw garlic into your diet.

Aromatherapy

Essential oil lavender has been shown to aid relaxation: add 4 - 5 drops to a bath, a steam inhalation or put on a handkerchief.

Herbal

Infusion of hawthorn berries provides a good tonic for the heart and circulatory system. Pour one cup of water on 2 teaspoons of hawthorn berries, infuse for 20 minutes and drink three times a day (warm or cold).

Homeopathy

For acute attacks take:

With fear and panic: Aconite 6c as often as required until symptoms are alleviated. When the chest feels as if it is squeezed by an iron band: Cactus grandiflorus 6c often as required until symptoms are alleviated.

Chinese Medicine

Angina is believed to be a stagnation of the blood and energy in the heart. Herbal medicines such as cinnamon twigs, safflower, red sage root or macrosten onion bulb may be prescribed.

Reflexology

Heat the lung and heart areas of the foot by supporting the foot with one hand, and vigorously rubbing the areas with the other palm and/or fist. To relax the central nervous system, massage the points of the toes, beginning with the little toe, until you reach the big toe. With two fingers massage down the inside of the foot on the area of the spine and the tailbone. Repeat on the foot.

Exercise

Regular, gentle exercise has been seen to improve angina. Walking is particularly good. However, consult your doctor before embarking on an exercise routine.

Orthodox

Treatment varies depending on the cause of angina. Drugs are prescribed to enlarge the blood vessels and reduce the workload of the heart muscle. Beta-blockers are sometimes given to reduce the force of the heart beat; antihypertensive drugs are sometimes given to lower high blood pressure and calcium-antagonist drugs are designed to reduce the force of the heart beat.