

## Patient information

### **Advice for Patients with Angina**

Emergency Care - Royal Liverpool Hospital

**You have been told that you may have angina.**

#### **What is angina?**

Angina is a pain, heaviness or pressure in the middle of your chest. The feeling can spread to your jaw, neck or one / both of your arms. Angina is most often brought on by exercise, exertion or emotional upset, but it can occur at rest or following a meal.

Simply resting will usually relieve angina, but you may need GTN to make it go away more quickly (it is usually relieved within one to ten minutes).

#### **What causes angina?**

Angina is caused by narrowing of the blood vessels (coronary arteries) that supply your heart muscle. This narrowing is caused by fatty deposits (atheromatous plaques).

This results in your heart muscle not getting enough blood flow causing “cramp” in your heart muscle, which you feel as angina.

#### **What can I do?**

Only surgery can unblock your arteries. However, most people’s angina can be controlled by medication without the need for surgery. It is vital that you take action to stop the narrowing getting worse.

#### **This includes:**

- Not smoking.
- Taking regular exercise.
- Keeping to a healthy weight.
- Learning to relax.
- Having regular blood pressure checks.
- Eating a healthy diet.

**Your family doctor (GP) practice nurse or hospital staff will advise you on these matters.**

## **Treatment**

Tablets and medication are usually very effective in controlling your angina. Your doctor will prescribe medication best suited to treating your symptoms. However, you may still experience some angina pains. You will be given GTN tablets or a spray to use in these situations.

### **When do I use my GTN?**

Use your GTN as soon as you get your angina. Some people prefer to stop any exertion, rest for a minute and only use their GTN if the angina has not gone.

If you are about to undertake any exertion which you know will bring on your angina (walking up a steep hill or gardening perhaps), then you may wish to use your GTN a minute or so before this exercise.

### **How do I use my GTN?**

Place a tablet under your tongue and let it dissolve or squirt one spray of GTN under your tongue and close your mouth. Rest if possible and sit down. GTN may cause a headache. You can take Paracetamol for this.

### **What if the pain does not go away?**

If your angina is still present five minutes after taking your GTN, then take another tablet or spray. This can be repeated after a further five minutes if needed. If your pain has not gone away after three GTN doses or within 15 minutes then you should call an ambulance immediately.

### **Can my angina change?**

If you start needing your GTN more often or the pains are taking longer to go, contact your family doctor (GP) for advice. If your angina pains start to occur at rest, then this is a sign your angina is worse and you should seek urgent medical attention.

Contact your GP for urgent advice or attend your Emergency Department (A&E).

**If your pains wake you from sleep and are not relieved by GTN then you should call an ambulance immediately.**

### **Can my angina lead to a heart attack?**

People with angina are more likely than other people of the same age to have a heart attack. However, quite a lot of people who have heart attacks have never had angina. You should call an ambulance immediately if:

- Your pain is much more severe than usual.
- You become unwell (e.g. vomiting, nausea, sweaty, pale or breathless).
- Your GTN does not relieve your pain.

**Treatments are available to limit the damage caused by a heart attack. These treatments are more effective the earlier they are given, following an attack.**

**Please do not hesitate to call an ambulance if you suspect you may be having a heart attack. The staff in the Emergency Department will be happy to see and advise you even if it is just a 'false' alarm.**

## **Feedback**

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated

## **Further Information**

**Department of Emergency Medicine**

**Telephone: 0151 706 2060**

**Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2060**

**British Heart Foundation**

**[www.bhf.org.uk](http://www.bhf.org.uk)**

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