

Stable angina

Your treatment options. Your second opinion.



What is stable angina

Your heart can be affected by a medical condition called angina that causes pain and discomfort in your chest. It occurs due to a reduced flow of blood to the muscles in your heart.

Heart muscles need a constant blood supply to receive oxygen. When your heart works harder, such as in response to physical activity or stress, but doesn't receive enough oxygen, it can cause chest pain and discomfort. It typically only lasts a few minutes and is called an angina episode.

Angina is more common in older adults. In most cases it's caused by narrowed or blocked 'coronary' arteries in your heart, or a blood clot, that develop due to hardening of the arteries (atherosclerosis), which is called 'coronary heart disease'.

- > Stable angina is when episodes are predictable, such as doing the same amount of physical activity, and goes away with rest.
- > Unstable angina is when episodes are unpredictable, without obvious triggers, and continue despite rest. It requires immediate medical attention.

Treatment for stable angina

Stable angina isn't life-threatening on its own, but is a warning that you face an increased risk of complications such as a heart attack. Treatment aims to provide immediate relief for episodes, prevent future episodes and reduce your risk of complications.

Healthy lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle may help to prevent stable angina getting worse and reduce your risk of complications. It includes not smoking, a healthy diet, regular exercise, limited alcohol intake, weight loss and stress reduction.

Medications

Medications may help to improve stable angina. For immediate relief of angina episodes, nitrates can quickly widen arteries supplying blood to heart muscles. To prevent future episodes, different medications may be needed, for example, beta-blockers and calcium channel blockers can improve blood to flow in arteries and reduce demand for oxygen by the heart muscle.

Your risk of complications such as a heart attack may be decreased with statins to lower cholesterol, aspirin to reduce blood clots and angiotension-converting enzyme (ACE) inhibitors to reduce blood pressure and improve vascular health generally.

Coronary artery bypass surgery

Bypass surgery may be considered if medications are not helping with symptoms or in some circumstances to improve survival for instance, 3 vessel disease or significant blockage in the left anterior descending or left main artery.

It involves taking a piece of blood vessel from another part of your body and using it in open heart surgery to re-route blood flow around a narrowed or blocked section of coronary artery to restore blood supply to heart muscles.

Angioplasty and stenting

Angioplasty and stenting are interventional surgical procedures that may be suggested to you as an initial treatment to achieve quick improvement of stable angina symptoms, or if medications haven't been successful.

Healthy lifestyle

A healthy lifestyle for stable angina includes:

- > Stop smoking
- > Eat a healthy diet
- > Do regular exercise
- > Be a healthy weight
- > Limit alcohol intake
- > Do stress-reduction techniques
- > Pace yourself and take rest breaks to avoid triggering angina episodes

Always consult a medical expert before commencing a course of treatment for any medical condition.

Immediate medical attention

You should seek immediate medical attention if there are signs that your angina may be becoming worse or unstable, including:

- > New chest pain and discomfort
- > More frequent tiredness
- > Faint or light-headedness
- > Unusual heartbeat (<60 or >120 per minute or unsteady).
- > Angina episode doesn't respond as expected to medications.





Most often angioplasty is done together with stenting, which is also called percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI). It's performed while you're awake, with local anaesthesia and has a quicker recovery time and less risk of surgical side effects compared to bypass surgery.

It involves inserting a catheter with a deflated balloon at the end and a stent (a short, wire-mesh tube) placed around the balloon, into a narrowed or blocked artery. The balloon is inflated to open the artery, which also expands the stent. The balloon is then deflated and catheter taken out, leaving the stent inside the artery to maintain the flow of blood to heart muscles.

Angioplasty and stenting and medical research

When evaluating you for angioplasty together with stenting or other treatments for stable angina, your treating medical specialist will take into account many complex factors, including the latest medical research.

Studies have found that angioplasty together with stenting may often be no more effective than medications for reducing the risk of death and heart attack and improving symptoms of stable angina. These studies emphasised that it's required to take the correct medications that achieve the best possible results.

However studies have also found that if medications have been tried but aren't successful, angioplasty and stenting or bypass surgery may be considered to improve stable angina. The choice of procedure will largely depend on what's most appropriate for your condition.

Angioplasty and stenting risks

While angioplasty and stenting are considered safe, short term complications do occur including bleeding, bruising, allergic reactions and kidney failure. In the long term, the artery may also become narrowed or blocked again. There is also a small risk of stroke or heart attack.

Understanding these risks is important, particularly given the possibility that angioplasty together with stenting may be no more effective than medications for stable angina.

Angioplasty and stenting and stable angina – the main points

- > If you have stable angina and you're considering angioplasty together with stenting for your initial treatment, take into account the medical studies showing that it may be no more effective than medications for reducing your risk of death and heart attack and improving symptoms, and also the risks involved.
- > An important aspect of treating stable angina with medications is always to take the correct medications that achieve the best possible results.
- > If medications have been tried and aren't successful, angioplasty and stenting, or bypass surgery, may be considered to improve your stable angina.

Would you like a second opinion?

Deciding on a treatment path for a medical condition can be a difficult, complex and stressful question.

Would you like the benefit of an expert second opinion to help you to decide on your treatment options?

If you want to know more about GPS² or have a general enquiry, please contact us on 1800 477 246 or email via contact@gps2.com.au

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