

# Chest Pain

We were unable to identify an authoritative, non-copyrighted article on the general subject of chest pain. However, separate articles on various causes of chest pain are available at [www.masterdocs.com](http://www.masterdocs.com). In addition, an excellent general article on chest pain prepared by A.D.A.M., Inc. for the U.S. National Library of Medicine and the National Institutes of Health is available for free on-line viewing at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003079.htm>

To obtain a free copy of the present document, go to [www.masterdocs.com](http://www.masterdocs.com).

Chest pain can be caused by disorders of the heart, lungs, bronchi, esophagus, chest wall muscles or tendons, ribs, nerves, skin, or other organs or tissues on the chest wall or inside the chest.

**Of the many causes of chest pain, only some are serious. Causes include:**

- Angina
- Asthma
- Digestive problems such as heartburn, indigestion, peptic ulcer, gastritis, gallstones, or acid reflux
- Injury to the muscles of the ribs
- Inflammation of the tendons of the chest wall
- Inflammation of the rib areas joining bone to cartilage
- Pneumonia or other lung or respiratory conditions
- Anxiety

**Some features of the chest pain important in deciding the cause are:**

- Area of distribution of pain and the location where it is worst
- Quality of the pain (e.g., tearing, sharp, dull, aching, stabbing, burning, squeezing)
- Severity of the pain (e.g., mild, moderate, severe)
- Is pain constant or intermittent?
- If intermittent, how often does it occur?
- Does pain involve the shoulder, arm, hand, neck, jaw, back, or abdomen?
- Things that make the pain worse (e.g., exercise, movement, bending, coughing, deep breaths, food)
- Things that make the pain better (e.g., resting, discontinuing exercise, food, medications such as antacids)
- Other symptoms associated with the chest pain.

**Certain causes of chest pain tend to be associated with typical symptoms (although other conditions can also cause similar symptoms):**

- Peptic ulcer – pain worse with an empty stomach and better with food
- Gallstones - pain worse after a fatty meal.
- Respiratory pain – pain worse with a deep breath or cough.
- Muscle strain of the chest wall (e.g., from blunt trauma, over-exertion or coughing) – area where pain is felt is tender to the touch
- Angina – pain may occur with exercise and disappears on resting.

The article at <http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/ency/article/003079.htm> contains the following notice:

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Updated by: Jacqueline A. Hart, M.D., Senior Medical Editor, A.D.A.M., Inc. Previously reviewed by Debbie Cohen, M.D., Renal and Electrolyte Division, University of Pennsylvania Medical Center, Philadelphia, PA. Review provided by VeriMed Healthcare Network (5/21/2002).

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