

Understanding the 6 Types of Chest Pain

By [Jenna Birch](#) , January 15, 2016

Understanding the 6 Types of Chest Pain

It might be a dull ache or a sharp stabbing, but regardless of nature, you have been taught to pay close attention to chest pain. If the burning, squeezing, throbbing or heaviness lasts for more than a couple of minutes, you might even experience mental warning alarms and begin to think of a heart attack.

While most chest pain is *not* a heart attack, it is something you should track and mention to your doctor, especially if it is recurring. It is also very important to note that sometimes serious chest pain doesn't follow the typical pattern. The categories below are to help you understand more about chest pain and when to seek medical attention. The categories below will help you to understand the different types of chest pain and the causes for alarm so that you can communicate immediately with your physician. Furthermore, only medical personnel can diagnose and treat you for chest pain. Here are the six types you might experience at one point or another.

Psychogenic pain

Psychogenic pain is pain that results from some sort of psychological issue. Often anxiety and panic attacks can cause chest pain, which tends to be sharp and lasts only a few seconds. Other symptoms that frequently occur with this type of chest pain are rapid breathing, rapid heart rate, sweating, shortness of breath and dizziness.

Heart pain

Pain resulting from heart issues like angina tends to feel like dull pressure or squeezing, focused on the left side of the chest. The pain can sometimes radiate into the arm or neck and is often accompanied by nausea and shortness of breath. It generally lasts a few minutes and gets better with rest. If this type of chest pain does not resolve quickly, get checked out by a doctor.

Lung pain

Lung-related chest pain is usually sharp. It may worsen when you breathe deeply or cough, and is usually associated with wheezing or shortness of breath. A pulmonary embolism, or blood clot in the lung, can produce sudden chest pain. If the symptoms are accompanied by anxiety, difficulty breathing or rapid heart rate, call your doctor right away.

Gastrointestinal chest pain

Conditions like acid reflux and ulcers can cause chest discomfort, which tends to feel like a burning pain in the lower half of the chest and upper part of the stomach or small intestines. It will often occur after eating a spicy meal and may get better after taking an antacid.

Musculoskeletal chest pain

Muscle-related chest pain is usually a sharp, lasts several seconds, and generally occurs after a recent trauma or injury to the chest — even intense coughing can inflame the chest wall. Although it may occupy the same general area as heart pain, there is often some tenderness to the touch involved in musculoskeletal pain. It may worsen significantly with movement and exertion.

Neurogenic chest pain

This type of chest pain is usually very intense, localized to area of an injury or a laceration where the nerves and blood vessels have become irritated. The discomfort often occurs in the upper chest and neck, radiating into the arm, and may also carry some numbness and poor circulation to the affected region.

Chest pain is much nuanced, so it is important to be specific when communicating to your doctor. Is it squeezing, dull, burning or sharp? Does it radiate into your neck or arm? What makes it worse? What makes it better? How long does it typically last? Jot down the answers to these questions on a piece of paper before your appointment.

If you have new or unexplained chest pain, or think you might possibly have a life-threatening condition like heart attack or pulmonary embolism, seek help right away. Don't wait.

Sources:

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[hic Thoracic Outlet Syndrome](#)