

Patient information from BMJ

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Stable angina: what you can do to help yourself

If you get angina, taking medicines is an important part of your treatment, but it's not the only thing you need to do to stay healthy. Your doctor will also talk to you about other steps you should take to improve your health and stop your angina and heart disease getting worse.

Here's a list of some things your doctor might suggest.

- Stop smoking. If you smoke, now is the time to stop. The more you smoke, the greater your chance of dying from heart disease. You can talk to your doctor about treatments that can help.
- Try to lose weight if you are obese or overweight. It may help to see a dietitian. Your doctor can also tell you about lifestyle changes, diets, and treatments that can help.
- Eat a healthy diet. You should eat at least five servings of fruit and vegetables every day, eat at least one serving of oily fish (such as salmon) every week, and cut back on fatty food and on sugary food and drinks.
- Take reasonable exercise. Talk to your doctor about what kind of exercise and how much is safe for you. Many people find it helpful to increase how much they exercise gradually.

Some people also choose to fit simple exercises into their day-to-day life: for example, by walking up the last flight of stairs at the office or by getting off the bus one stop early and walking the rest of the way.

- Limit how much alcohol you drink. Drinking guidelines vary between countries. In the UK, for example, the advice is not to drink more than 14 units of alcohol a week, and that you shouldn't drink more than a few units in one day

One unit is half a pint of ordinary-strength beer or a pub measure (25 millilitres) of a spirit, such as whisky or gin. A small glass (125 millilitres) of wine is about one and a half units. But bear in mind that different wines and beers have different strengths of alcohol.

- Learn how to manage stress. Exercising regularly and getting enough sleep can help. You might also consider taking a class in meditation or allowing yourself 15 to 20 minutes each day to sit quietly, breathe deeply, and imagine a peaceful scene.

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When you're feeling angry, try counting to 10 to give yourself time to calm down. You might ask your doctor for other suggestions about managing stress.

- Use a self-help angina plan. If you just found out that you have angina, a self-help angina plan may help you feel better and feel less anxious and depressed. These plans often involve working through a workbook, with regular support and advice from a nurse. You can ask your doctor about this kind of plan.
- Closely follow your doctor's recommendations on treatments, lifestyle changes, and follow-up appointments. This will give you the best chance of staying healthy.

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