

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT STABLE ISCHEMIC HEART DISEASE

What Is Stable Ischemic Heart Disease?

Stable ischemic heart disease (SIHD) occurs when the heart does not get enough oxygen because of poor blood flow. The heart gets its oxygen from blood flowing through small blood vessels and not from the large blood vessels used to pump blood through the body. When the heart does not get enough oxygen, you may feel pain or pressure in your chest, known as angina. Angina usually occurs during physical exercise or emotional stress when the heart has to work harder and needs more oxygen. It lasts for a few minutes and goes away with rest or medication. The most common cause of SIHD is obstruction of the small blood vessels. Early diagnosis and treatment are important to reduce risk for serious complications, such as a heart attack or stroke.

Am I at Risk?

SIHD is more common in men than in women, and it occurs more often in middle and older age.

Risk factors include:

- Diabetes
- High blood pressure
- High cholesterol
- Cigarette smoking
- Being overweight
- Drinking alcohol
- A family history of heart disease at a young age

How Is It Diagnosed?

- Your health care provider will ask you questions about your symptoms and medical history.
- You will have a physical examination and may have blood tests.
- You may have additional tests to show how your heart is working. These tests are painless and include a chest x-ray; an electrocardiogram, which measures the electrical activity of the heart muscle; and an echocardiogram, which creates moving pictures of how your heart is functioning.
- You may have a stress test, which provides information on how exercise affects angina symptoms and heart functioning.
- Other tests may be needed, such as coronary angiography (also known as cardiac catheterization). This test looks directly at the heart blood vessels by filling them with dye and taking pictures to identify blockages.



How Is It Treated?

The goal of treatment is to prevent serious events, like a heart attack or stroke, and to reduce angina and other symptoms.

- A low dose of aspirin every day will help prevent a heart attack, unless you have risk factors that would make this unsafe for you.
- Several medications can reduce the frequency of angina symptoms, including nitrates and beta-blockers.
- If your arteries are clogged enough, your doctor may widen them with a nonsurgical procedure called percutaneous coronary intervention.
- Blockages that cannot be treated with percutaneous coronary intervention may need heart bypass surgery.

What Lifestyle Changes Should I Make?

The most important part of your treatment is to understand the disease and to make lifestyle changes that will improve your heart health, such as:

- Controlling other health conditions, such as high blood pressure, high cholesterol, and diabetes
- Quitting smoking
- Following a heart-healthy diet
- Increasing physical activity
- Limiting alcohol intake
- Reducing stress
- Getting an annual flu shot to help avoid heart complications from the virus

Questions for My Doctor

- What is my risk for stable ischemic heart disease?
- What are the warning signs of a heart attack?
- What exercise is safe for me to do?
- What medicines are best for me?

For More Information



American College of Physicians
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American Heart Association

www.heart.org/en/health-topics/heart-attack/angina-chest-pain/angina-pectoris-stable-angina

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

www.cdc.gov/heartdisease