

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 can do to stay healthy. Your doctor will talk to you about other steps you can take to improve your health and stop your angina 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. Many people try a **Mediterranean-type diet**, that is higher in fruit and vegetables, legumes, nuts and lean protein. You may be advised to 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. Try to reduce how much **salt** you eat too.
- Try to **exercise**. Experts usually recommend at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity activity per week. This could be as simple as brisk walking. If you are more active, you could aim for at least 75 minutes of higher-intensity aerobic activity and include resistance training. 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.
- Increase your **activity level** in your 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. Gardening and household work can also count as exercise.
- 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.[\[1\]](#)
- Ask your doctor about a **cardiac rehabilitation plan**. Sometimes this is called cardiac rehab. It is a plan made just for you, that gives you help and support from a team of different healthcare professionals. It might include supervised exercise programmes, support with your diet, or learning how to manage stress.

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- Make sure you talk to your doctor if you are feeling worried or have a very **low mood**. There are treatments and things they may be able to suggest to help if you are feeling depressed or anxious.
- Look for **patient support groups** that are local to you. There are many organisations that help support people with angina and heart conditions. They may be able to offer you more information and practical or emotional support. They may also be able to point you towards other services you will find helpful.
- If you have other medical conditions, closely follow your doctor's recommendations on treatments for these as well as for your angina. Attend your follow-up appointments. This will give you the best chance of staying healthy.

References

1. NHS UK. Alcohol units. Aug 2024 [internet publication].

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