

# CPR: Stress Pains & Stress Sickness: Signs, Symptoms & How to Treat



ProTrainings

## Is it a Heart Attack? Identifying Cardiac vs. Noncardiac Chest Pain

When your heart is healthy, you usually can't feel it working. But what if you can? It's easy to feel a twinge or tightness and be afraid it's a cardiac issue. In truth, there are multiple sources of chest pain unrelated to the heart, also known as noncardiac chest pain.

Learn the sources of and differences between cardiac and noncardiac chest pain, so you're better prepared the next time you or someone you know feels something unusual.



#### What It Feels Like...

- Heartburn
- Difficulty swallowing
- A bitter taste in the mouth
- Feeling of food sticking in the chest or throat

#### It Might Be...

**Gastroesophageal reflux disease, or GERD.**

#### What It Feels Like...

- Sense of impending doom
- Shortness of breath
- Chest tightness
- Palpitations
- Sweating
- Dizziness

#### It Might Be...

**Anxiety or panic attack.**

#### What It Feels Like...

- Chest wall pain
- High tension within chest muscles
- Struggling to breathe without pain
- Sharp or stabbing chest pain that worsens with movement or deep breathing

#### It Might Be...

**Musculoskeletal pain, such as inflammation of the costal cartilage (costochondritis) or when the muscles between your ribs become overstretched or torn (intercostal muscle strain).**

#### What It Feels Like...

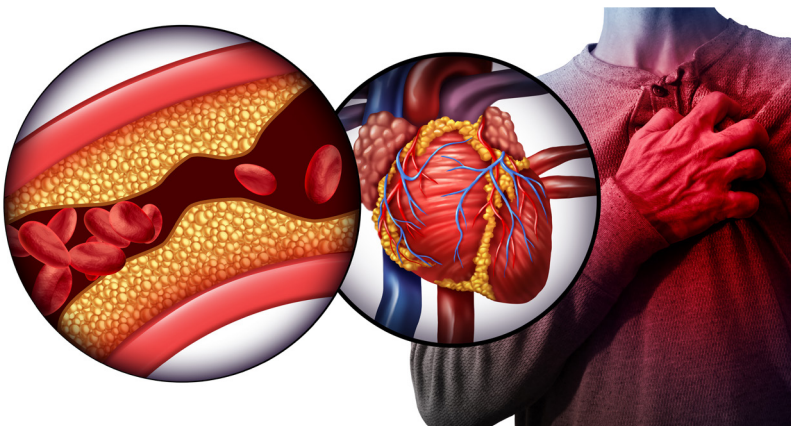
- Sudden chest pain or discomfort
- Shortness of breath
- Palpitations
- Vomiting
- Fainting
- Nausea

#### It Might Be...

**Stress-induced cardiomyopathy, or broken heart syndrome.**

## Cardiac Chest Pain

Distinguishing between a cardiac event, like a heart attack, and a noncardiac events with similar symptoms, like broken heart syndrome, can be difficult. The good news is medical tests such as ECGs, blood work and imaging studies allow doctors to diagnose the condition and prescribe proper treatment.



### Symptoms for cardiac chest pain include...

- Pain in the neck, jaw, left arm, and between the shoulder blades
- Heaviness, pressure, or squeezing in the chest area
- Unexplained tiredness
- Shortness of breath
- Profuse sweating
- Indigestion

## **Here are a few steps you can take if the person is experiencing cardiac chest pain.**

**Airing on the side of caution, 911 should be called if it's reasonable to believe a person is experiencing cardiac chest pain.**



**Providing the person with two to four baby aspirin (~324 to 325mg) can help prevent a decrease in blood flow if the chest pain is being caused by an arterial blockage.**



**Ensure the person experiencing the chest pain is in loose, comfortable clothing that isn't constrictive to their neck, arms, or chest.**



**If it seems likely the person is experiencing a cardiac arrest, begin performing CPR after calling paramedics. Continue performing CPR until medical professionals can intervene.**



Knowing the symptoms for both cardiac and noncardiac medical events and ensuring the person experiencing either receives medical care quickly can tremendously help the person experiencing chest pain. Just remember, it is reasonable to make sure chest pain is noncardiac involvement by seeking advanced medical attention.