

# **Gas Pain in Chest: Heartburn or Heart problems?**

## **Can gas cause chest pain?**

The esophagus is the tube that connects the mouth to the stomach. It passes directly behind the heart. Acid or gas in the esophagus can cause irritation and lead to chest pain that mimics heart attack symptoms.

It can be difficult to tell the difference between gas pain and a heart attack. Both can cause chest pain or chest pressure. Often it is the symptoms you have in addition to the chest pain that indicates whether the pain is coming from your heart or somewhere else.

## **What is the difference between gas pain and heart attack?**

Classically, chest pain that is associated with the heart muscle not getting enough oxygen (angina) is described as pressure, tightness or heaviness. A person who is having a heart attack may say it “feels like an elephant is sitting on my chest.” Chest pain that is due to angina or a heart attack is often associated with other heart-related symptoms. Heart attack symptoms include:

- Left side chest pain that radiates to the neck, jaw, shoulders, arms or back
- Shortness of breath
- Breaking out in a cold sweat
- Lightheadedness or dizziness
- Sudden onset nausea or vomiting
- Palpitations or abnormal heart rhythms ([afib](#), ventricular tachycardia, or ventricular fibrillation)
- Abrupt changes in your heart rate
- Chest pain that is described as heaviness, pressure, tightness or band-like
- Unexplained anxiety or a sense of impending doom

The symptoms associated with angina or heart attack are different from gas in chest symptoms. These symptoms are often related to the gastrointestinal system and may include:

- Belching
- Abdominal bloating
- Flatulence
- Pain that radiates from the chest to the upper abdomen
- Pain moves around the abdomen
- Indigestion
- Decreased appetite
- Chest or abdominal pain that is described as sharp, stabbing, cramping, or burning
- Passing gas relieves pain

## **How to get rid of it?**

There are a variety of causes for irritation of the esophagus and gas in the chest including:

- Food intolerances or sensitivities
- Food poisoning

- Reflux (GERD)
- Heartburn
- Gallbladder disease
- Inflammatory conditions like inflammatory bowel disease and Crohn's disease
- Irritable bowel syndrome

If you have chest pains and gassy tendencies you may be being affected by one of these gastrointestinal problems. You should see your doctor if symptoms are persistent or recurrent. It is important to take note of when the symptoms come and go and if there are any identifiable irritating factors. For example, people who develop heartburn and chest pain every time they eat spicy food may be able to avoid the reflux and gas in chest simply by avoiding spicy food. Other people may notice pain in the upper right side of the abdomen that radiates to the shoulder blades every time they eat a particularly fatty meal. This type of history indicates a possible gallbladder problem. Having details about the type, timing, and duration of symptoms provides your doctor with important clues as to what may be causing the problem and can help guide diagnostic work up and therapy recommendations.

## **How do I know if my chest pain is gas?**

If you suffer from pain being caused by trapped gas in the chest and an antacid relieves your symptoms that is a reassuring sign that your chest pain is probably not coming from your heart. People who have chest pain due to GERD or heartburn may find that their symptoms resolve with medication like a proton pump inhibitor (PPI) or an acid blocker.

If you think a certain food is causing your symptoms it is often recommended to try eliminating that food for a period of time to see if your symptoms resolve. Common foods that can cause gastrointestinal problems are:

- Gluten
- Lactose. Found in dairy products like milk, cheese, ice cream and yogurt.
- Cruciferous vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, and cauliflower
- Artificial sweeteners
- Carbonated beverages
- Caffeine
- Spicy food
- Alcohol

## **Can gas build up in your chest?**

Gas is a normal part of digestion. We get gas in our system by swallowing air into the stomach or as a byproduct of food breakdown. Acid and air from the stomach can reflux into the esophagus and get trapped there. This can cause sharp pain in the chest. Things that increase the air in your stomach include:

- Drinking through a straw
- Chewing gum
- Sucking on hard candy between meals
- Talking while eating
- Eating too fast

## Can it cause left arm pain?

Pain from gas trapped in the chest usually radiates down to the abdomen although occasionally it can radiate to the arms and back. In the case of reflux, sometimes a sour taste or even small food particles can be propelled back up to the throat and mouth.

It is unusual for gas to cause left side chest pain that radiates to your left arm. If you develop chest pain that radiates to your left arm or other heart attack symptoms, call 911 or seek emergency medical care. A heart attack occurs when blood flow to a part of the heart muscle is blocked. When blood flow is blocked, the heart muscle in that area does not get the oxygen it needs and the heart muscle begins to die. A heart attack is a medical emergency and minutes matter. If you or someone you are with has symptoms concerning a heart attack [immediate evaluation](#) can mean the difference between life and death. It is nothing to be embarrassed about if you go to the emergency room because you think you are having a heart attack and find out your symptoms were caused by gas pains.