

Non-ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction (Non-STEMI) Patient Education

What Is a Non-STEMI?

A Non-STEMI is a type of heart attack that happens when blood flow to the heart muscle is partially blocked. This causes some damage to the heart muscle but usually not as severe as a full blockage heart attack. It still needs quick medical care.

Causes and Risk Factors

Narrowing or blockage of heart arteries by fatty deposits (plaque)

High blood pressure

Smoking

Diabetes

High cholesterol

Family history of heart disease

Being overweight

Not exercising enough

Stress

Older age

Signs and Symptoms

Chest pain or pressure that may last more than a few minutes

Pain in arms, neck, jaw, or back

Shortness of breath

Sweating

Feeling weak, dizzy, or lightheaded

Nausea or vomiting

Some people have mild or no chest pain but feel very tired or short of breath

Early Warning Signs

Chest discomfort that lasts or comes and goes

Unusual tiredness or weakness

Shortness of breath during normal activities

Complications if Untreated or Not Following Treatment

Heart failure (heart becomes weak and cannot pump well)

Dangerous heart rhythms (arrhythmias)

Another heart attack

Damage to heart valves or heart muscle

Death

Treatment and Self-Care Measures

Get prompt medical care — you may need medicines, tests, or procedures to open arteries

Take all medicines as prescribed

Follow doctor's instructions about rest and activity

Avoid heavy lifting or strenuous exercise until cleared

Keep all follow-up appointments

Common Medications

Aspirin: Stops blood clots. Side effects: stomach upset, bleeding risk.

Blood thinners (e.g., clopidogrel): Prevent clots. Side effects: bleeding.

Beta-blockers: Lower heart rate and blood pressure. Side effects: tiredness, dizziness.

ACE inhibitors: Relax blood vessels. Side effects: cough, dizziness.

Statins: Lower cholesterol. Side effects: muscle aches, liver issues.

Nitroglycerin: Relieves chest pain. Side effects: headache, low blood pressure.

Dietary Needs

Eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.

Avoid fried, fatty, and processed foods.

Limit salt and added sugars.

Drink alcohol only in moderation or not at all.

Lifestyle Changes

Stop smoking completely.

Exercise regularly as advised by your doctor.

Maintain a healthy weight.

Manage stress through relaxation techniques or counseling.

Control blood pressure, cholesterol, and diabetes carefully.

Safety Considerations

Take all medications exactly as prescribed.

Don't skip follow-up visits or tests.

Know your symptoms and when to seek help.

Use a medical ID bracelet if recommended.

Prevention and Maintenance Tips

Control risk factors like diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol.

Follow a heart-healthy lifestyle.

Keep track of your medications and labs.

Report any new or worsening symptoms right away.

When to Call for Help

Call Your Home Health Agency or Doctor When:

You have mild or occasional chest discomfort that goes away with rest.

You experience minor side effects from your medications and need advice.

You notice mild swelling in your feet or legs without pain.

You feel more tired than usual but have no new chest pain or breathing problems.

You need help understanding your diet, medications, or lab results.

You need to schedule or reschedule doctor appointments.

Call the Emergency Room (911) Immediately When:

You have chest pain or pressure lasting more than 5 minutes or that comes back often.

You experience sudden or severe shortness of breath or trouble breathing.

You feel faint, dizzy, or very weak.

You have chest pain spreading to your arm, neck, jaw, or back.

You have new sweating, nausea, or vomiting with chest pain.

You feel confused, have trouble speaking, or sudden weakness on one side.

You notice sudden severe swelling, pain, or redness in your legs.

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Patient Homework / Assessment

Instructions: Read each statement below carefully. Choose True or False and correct any false statements.

True or False: Non-STEMI is a type of heart attack caused by partial blockage of blood flow to the heart.

True or False: Smoking increases the risk of having a Non-STEMI.

True or False: Chest pain during a Non-STEMI can feel like pressure or tightness.

True or False: Mild chest pain that goes away quickly does not need medical attention.

True or False: Aspirin helps prevent blood clots during a heart attack.

True or False: You can stop your heart medications if you feel better.

True or False: Eating lots of fried and fatty foods is good for your heart.

True or False: Exercise should be avoided completely after a Non-STEMI.

True or False: Managing stress can help prevent another heart attack.

True or False: Always tell your doctor about side effects from your medications.

True or False: High blood pressure and diabetes increase the risk of heart attacks.

True or False: You should wait several hours before going to the emergency room if you have chest pain.

True or False: Nitroglycerin helps relieve chest pain by relaxing blood vessels.

True or False: Regular doctor visits help prevent more heart problems.

True or False: You should only call your doctor if you have chest pain.

True or False: Heart attacks can happen to people of any age.

True or False: High cholesterol can clog arteries and lead to heart attacks.

True or False: Drinking large amounts of alcohol is healthy for the heart.

True or False: Limiting salt helps control blood pressure.

True or False: Dizziness or fainting after a Non-STEMI is not serious.

ASSESSMENT of WELL-BEING INDIVIDUALIZED PATIENT HOMEWORK

Individualized Questions for Patients

(For patients to answer with their healthcare provider.)

When did you have your Non-STEMI or last heart-related hospital stay?

What medications are you currently taking for your heart condition?

Have your cholesterol, blood pressure, and blood sugar been checked recently? What were the results?

What foods do you usually eat in a day?

How often do you exercise and what type of activities do you do?

Do you smoke or use tobacco products?

Have you had new or worsening chest pain, shortness of breath, dizziness, or swelling since your last visit?

When is your next appointment with your heart doctor?

Do you know the symptoms of another heart attack?

Are you confident about when to call your doctor or emergency services?

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Answer Key with Explanations

True

Non-STEMI is a type of heart attack caused by partial blockage of blood flow to the heart muscle.

True

Smoking damages blood vessels and increases the risk of heart attacks including Non-STEMI.

True

Chest pain during a Non-STEMI often feels like pressure, squeezing, or tightness.

False

Even mild chest pain should be evaluated by a healthcare provider to rule out serious problems.

True

Aspirin helps prevent blood clots that can block blood flow during a heart attack.

False

You should never stop heart medications without consulting your doctor, even if you feel better.

False

Fried and fatty foods raise cholesterol and can clog arteries, increasing heart attack risk.

False

Exercise is usually encouraged after a Non-STEMI but should be done as your doctor advises.

True

Managing stress helps lower risk for another heart attack.

True

It is important to tell your doctor about any side effects from your medications.

True

High blood pressure and diabetes increase your risk for heart attacks.

False

You should go to the emergency room right away if you have chest pain that worries you.

True

Nitroglycerin relaxes blood vessels and can relieve chest pain.

True

Regular doctor visits help detect and prevent further heart problems.

False

You should call your doctor for many concerns, not just chest pain.

True

Heart attacks can happen at any age, though risk increases with age.

True

High cholesterol causes plaque buildup in arteries, leading to heart attacks.

False

Drinking large amounts of alcohol is harmful to heart health.

True

Limiting salt helps control blood pressure.

False

Dizziness or fainting after a Non-STEMI are serious symptoms and need prompt medical attention.