



American Heart Association®

Addressing Recurrent Pericarditis

RECURRENT PERICARDITIS TREATMENT

Recurrent pericarditis refers to the return of inflammation in the pericardium (also known as a “flare”) after a symptom-free period of at least 4 weeks following an initial episode. Managing this condition focuses on reducing inflammation, preventing future recurrences, and minimizing complications. Treatment typically involves a combination of medications and lifestyle modifications tailored to each patient’s needs.

Doctors typically first prescribe aspirin or another type of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug (NSAID). You also might be prescribed the anti-inflammatory drug colchicine and be advised to restrict or limit physical activity to help your body respond to the medication and prevent the pericarditis from returning.

You might also need to take additional drugs, such as interleukin-1 (IL-1) inhibitors or corticosteroids, to control your symptoms.

Ask your health care professional how long you can expect to be on any medication and any potential side effects you might experience. If you need financial help, your pharmacist can tell you about possible coupons or prescription assistance programs.

Medications your health care professional might prescribe:



Aspirin It and other NSAIDs work by blocking an enzyme involved in producing prostaglandins, substances that cause inflammation and pain.



Colchicine This drug, which also reduces inflammation, is typically prescribed for 6-12 months in addition to aspirin or another NSAID.



Interleukin-1 (IL-1) inhibitors These medications block the activity of IL-1, a powerful proinflammatory cytokine, and help prevent pericarditis from recurring.



Corticosteroids These anti-inflammatory medications help control pericarditis symptoms. They are typically used for people who do not respond to NSAIDs and colchicine or for people who have a condition that makes it unsafe to take those medications.



Pericardiectomy The surgical removal of the sac around the heart is typically considered as a last resort if medications haven’t worked.

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Visit heart.org/recurrentpericarditis for more information.