



American Heart Association®

Addressing Recurrent Pericarditis

THOUGHTFUL TALKS WITH YOUR HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONAL: BEFORE DIAGNOSIS

Recurrent pericarditis often can be misdiagnosed. You might need to seek a second (or third) opinion or see a specialist, such as a cardiologist.

If you have an autoimmune disease, such as lupus or rheumatoid arthritis, your rheumatologist also might be helpful, as recurrent pericarditis could be related to your condition. Because it also can be caused by a bacterial or viral infection, you also could see an infectious disease specialist.

Be sure to tell the doctor if you have recently had a viral infection such as the flu, COVID-19, herpes, or a stomach virus. Also, share if you have been diagnosed with an autoimmune condition, such as lupus, scleroderma or rheumatoid arthritis. Let your doctor know if you've had a recent heart procedure like radiation or chemotherapy or an injury to your heart.

What you may experience at your appointment:



You will be asked about your symptoms. How long have you had them? Have you had them before? If so, how long ago? Does anything make them better or worse?



Your blood work and vital signs will be checked.



You might be directed to get imaging tests such as an EKG, chest X-ray, echocardiogram, or MRI to look at your heart.



You might be prescribed medication.

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Visit heart.org/recurrentpericarditis for more information.

Thoughtful Talks With Your Health Care Professional: After Diagnosis

Your treatment plan can be based on your doctor's expertise with your input. The following questions can help you and your health care professional make decisions about any medications and lifestyle changes.

Questions about treatment:

- How long can I expect the symptoms to last?
- How long does recurrent pericarditis last?
- What medication(s) is/are right for me?
- Are there any risks to taking that/those medication(s)?
- How long will I need to take it/them?
- How will we know if the medication(s) is/are working?
- Will medication alone be enough to treat my recurrent pericarditis?
- Are there any potential side effects I should watch for or report?
- Should I avoid any other medications or any foods or dietary supplements while taking this medication?
- How often should I have follow-up appointments, and when should they start?
- Should I consult any other kind of doctor or specialist, such as a cardiologist or rheumatologist?
- Would it be helpful for me to see a dietician or therapist as part of my care?

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Questions about possible lifestyle changes:

- Should I avoid or limit any foods or beverages, such as caffeine or alcohol?
- Do I need to restrict exercise or keep my heart rate below a certain level? If so, for how long?
- Is it safe for me to:
 - Go for a walk, run, swim or do yoga?
 - Carry or take care of my children?
 - Walk up a flight of stairs?
 - Perform my job duties?
- Will certain positions be less painful when I sleep or lie down?
- Is it safe to get seasonal vaccines (flu, COVID-19, RSV, etc.)?
- Are there any alternative therapies or non-prescription options I can use to relieve pain?
- May I donate blood?
- Is it OK for me to travel or be away from home for an extended period?
- How can I manage the stress, depression, or sleeplessness that I might experience due to missing time from work or being unable to do my normal activities?

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